

EDITORIAL

TAKING A SHORT CUT ACROSS LOTS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE prolonged debate at the convention of the A.F. of L., upon how to escape the raids that are contemplated against the Unions' treasuries through the agency of damage suits brought by the employers, indicates that the issue has become critical; it also indicates that Bro. Labor seems to forget his cue.

That the issue is critical there can be no doubt. Already a \$250,000 judgment for damages has been entered against the Danbury hatters; and, the appetite of employerdom being whetted, a suit for three times the amount has been instituted against the miners Union.

The critical aspect of the issue is obvious. No less obvious should be the odd posture of Bro. Labor in trying to find ways to escape.

Repeatedly has it been shown in these columns that the employer does not consider himself through with the "good" Gompers and similar Union men when he reserves to himself and stows away the bulk of the fruit of his employes' toil. Having secured that, the wide awake employer thereupon endeavors to utilize even the small pittance that he returns to them in wages. The trick is done by steering the Union funds into his Savings and other banks. The comparatively small Union dues paid by the individual "good Union man," become huge piles when multiplied by the number of all the men. It becomes as big a pile as the guano deposits of the sea-fowl on the Peruvian coast, however small the deposit of each individual bird may be;—and it is used very much as the total guano deposits are used. Indeed, the banks in which these Union funds are deposited are in the nature of guano mounds.

The employer, however affluent, frequently needs cash. The financier is a shark. To him the manufacturer, mine operator, or what not, applies with dislike only, and only when he must. If the manufacturer has provided himself with a bank, Savings Bank usually, to which he has easy access, he can ignore the finan-

cier shark. He raises from the Savings, or other such bank, the loan that he needs, and the Union deposits render the funds ready at hand. With these deposits the manufacturer then “improves” his plant. He introduces improved machinery. In other words, and to make a long story short, the Union deposits serve the employer as means by which to eliminate labor; thereby to reduce his pay-roll; and, seeing that the elimination of labor is tantamount to an increase of the supply in the already overstocked labor market, the final effect of the employer’s move is to reduce wages.

Obviously, the storing up of funds and placing them snugly where the employer can get at them is the ideal thing for the employer—a thing that is usually done with the aid and through the instrumentality of the Civic-Federationized labor-leader, the employer’s “labor-lieutenant.”

Now, then, smooth as this course runs, it is somewhat round-about. To seize the funds outright is a short cut across lots. The funds of the miners, for instance, in banks accessible to the mine operators, often is a huge guano deposit. Why borrow it? Why not seize it? grab it? pocket it? The mine-owners, among others have answered the question with: “There is no reason why not”—and have started to act accordingly.

This being thus, how explain the debate among the labor-lieutenants of the employers to prevent their masters from taking the short cut across lots? Or can it be that the whole debate was intended “for the galleries”?

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded May 2014

slpns@slp.org