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## Why Peabodyism Exists (February 13, 1904)

The name of Colorado ought to be changed to Colorussia. Not a vestige of democratic government is left there. The rule of military despotism is absolute. And this is as it should be. The working class of Colorado ordered it so and their will is and shall and must always and everywhere be law. In the state elections last fall all the workingmen of Colorado, organized and unorganized, with the exception of less than 3,000 voters who voted the Socialist ticket — and many of these were not workingmen — voted for precisely what they are now getting. They have not the excuse of having been misled or betrayed by false leaders. The officers and leaders of the ALU and WF of M are class-conscious stalwarts in the labor movement. They are men of intelligence, courage, and honor and this applies also to the press of the Western movement. These leaders were deserted by early the whole rank and file, who rushed pell-mell into the shambles and are now being mercilessly slaughtered for their treason.

The election returns of last fall show that an overwhelming majority of the members of the ALU and the WF of M voted for capitalist despotism in preference to social democracy — and this in defiance of the fact that their national organizations, through their delegates in convention assembled, had repudiated the Republican, Democratic, and Populistic sections of the capitalist party, and had declared unequivocally in favor of the Socialist Party. Following this the state was canvassed over and over again by Socialist agitators and speakers, but when election day came, the union men, so-called, deserted the standards of their organizations, repudiated the action of their representatives, betrayed their union principles, and insulted their brave and conscientious leaders by supporting almost solidly the candidates of the mill and mine owning plutocracy.

This is the noted fact and Pebodyism is simply the fruit of that fact. Colorado workingmen are reaping exactly what they have sown. It is good for them, galling as the crop may be, for it will make union men of them on election day and it would seem that nothing else on earth would teach them their class interests and make them quit scabbing on their class at the polls.

They knew that Peabody was the candidate of the mill and mine owners — that he would govern the workers and that the mine owners would govern the governor. Most of the workers of Colorado voted for him. All of them have got him. (Is it the concern of a union man how another votes?)

Most of the rest went to the Populist graveyard and dug up its corpse and hugged it convulsively to their bosom. Those who voted for Peabody to govern them did so to please their economic masters. The rest voted for a “good man” to save them. Anything except confidence in, and support of the one and only party that stood for and whose candidates were fighting for their class!

In 1894 they crucified Governor Davis H. Waite, because he stood by them instead of their masters. In 1904 they are crucified by retributive justice.

I thank whatever gods are entitled to their credit for Governor Peabody. He suits me in everything, except that he does not go far enough. He ought to make a bull pen of the whole state. An overwhelming majority of the workingmen voted for it and he ought not — and in fact can not without violating his official oath — disregard their wishes.

As an eye-opener for the working class we forced to yield the palm to Peabody. He is making more socialists than all the agitators combined. It almost seems as if Peabody is a socialist spy in the camp of the enemy. In any event he is doing the business — teaching workers just what it means to elect capitalist candidates to govern them — “a consummation devoutly to be wished.”<sup>1</sup>

The fight in Colorado is the result of the betrayal of the working class by the workers themselves on election day. They are in for it and no power on earth can relieve them of the consequences of their acts.

To pour out sympathy on them is time wasted. To fight for them and while fighting to *tell them the truth, especially about themselves*, is the duty of those who are with them in the struggle.

The innocent suffer with the guilty, but the final outcome will be good for all. The guilty will learn better and the innocent will be vindicated and strengthened.

May the strikers win and above all may they learn to remember election day and keep it class-conscious.

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President Gompers and President Mitchell declare that a union man has a right to vote as he pleases. Has he? let us see. Before unions were organized men claimed the right to work when they pleased. Most of them still claim it and keep out of unions. Parry says they have that right and that is his pivotal objection to unionism. Gompers and Mitchell say that a union man cannot work when he pleases — that he can not work if by doing so he lowers the wages or otherwise injures his fellow men, that he must merge his individual interest as a worker in the larger interest of his class, that through the prosperity of his class his own is advanced. In other words, the union decides whether a man shall work or not. This vital principle of the individual, which involves his very life, he is compelled to surrender in the interest of his class.

Are men united in the trade unions that they may be divided at the polls?

Is it the *United Mine Workers* the day before the election and the *Divided Mine Workers* on election day?

Is not the labor question a political question?

Parry says a man has the right to work as he pleases. Gompers and Mitchell say a man has the right to vote as he pleases. Their position is essentially the same and leads to the same results.

The workingman has the ballot. Election day comes. He has now to decide if all the workers shall be ruled and robbed by a capitalist government, or whether they shall rule themselves as free men and enjoy the fruit of their labor.

That is the question the workingman is called upon to decide every election day.

Has he a right to vote as *he* pleases? And if he *pleases* to betray his class and vote for their masters, is he a union man, or is he a scab?

Has my fellow-unionist the right to vote me into wage slavery and still claim to be a union man? Is it not in fact the rankest kind of scabbing?

Gompers and Mitchell say it is none of the union's business how a member votes. I say that the union based upon this principle, or rather lack of principle, in this year 1904, is not a *union* at all in any intelligent sense — it is a *disunion* and promotes division where it is most fatal — at the ballot box.

The man who votes against his class is not a union man. He may wear a union badge as big as a mule-shoe, he may be ignorant, but whatever else he may be or not be, he is a scab. He betrays, like Judas, his fellow

worker to his capitalist master, robs him of what his labor produces, impoverishes his family, starves his wife, deforms his children, and all this he does because, according to Gompers and Mitchell, “he can vote as he pleases” and the unions of his fellows have no right to object to his unalienable right to vote them into wage slavery and still strut and swagger as a “union man.”

Hell is full of such union (?) men. Give me the union man who is true to his class politically as well as economically, 365 days in the year, and 366 days in the leap year. That kind of a union man knows his duty and performs it and does not have to have it “forced down his throat” that it is treason to labor to vote for slavery.

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<sup>1</sup> From *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* (c. 1602), Act III, Scene I, by William Shakespeare (1564-1616).