

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 8, NO. 302.

NEW YORK, MONDAY, APRIL 27, 1908.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

A LOGICAL SEQUENCE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE report that the carpenters' union of Roswell voted an appropriation to help purchase an armory site for that city should rouse no condemnation against that union for its action. What the report should do is to rouse condemnation against the principles upon which the union, and thereby the American Federation of Labor, is organized. The union's action admirably serves as an illustration of the defects of those principles.

The A.F. of L. is not organized upon the principle of overthrowing the wages system. It accepts this system as of and for all time. Its chief concern is not to give the workingman what he produces, or the equivalent thereof, and thereby make man his own master economically; the chief concern of the A.F. of L. is to give the workingman only a "share" in what he produces, and allow the rest to go to a non-producing capitalist. This economic arrangement works out so that wealth is piled high on the employer's side, and not piled at all on the producer's side. The non-producing class gets all that the workers create, except that small part which is returned and just enables the working class to crawl through life. This means that the workers work not for their own benefit, but for the profit of someone else. As a result they are continually kept in need and in the fear of want. The system compels them to look out for work, no matter what the form of it may be.

Ten to one the carpenters' union of Roswell justifies itself in voting to help along an armory for harboring strikebreaking militiamen on the ground that the building of it affords its membership "work." So did the Vallejo unions some years ago ask to have the Government itself build battleships, in order that union men could have the eight-hour day. So do the Brewery Workers, A.F. of L., now ask to have liquor making and beer making continued because otherwise they would have no "work"! These facts force the conclusion that with the A.F. of L. it does not

matter what the death dealing and destructive nature of the work in hand may be; it is commendable because it furnishes “work.” Acting obedient to these dictates, the carpenters’ union sees no wrong in doing what it did. What it did was but a logical sequence of the principles upon which the American Federation of Labor is based.

A labor organization is one which will lead workingmen out of the oppressing conditions surrounding them. The A.F. of L. does not do this. It keeps workingmen fettered to their conditions. “Work” is not the end and aim of the Labor Movement—the chattel slave of the South had work aplenty. The full returns of work are what the workingmen must demand; “sharing” up means dependence and deprivation. So long as “sharing” up is done—a thing not done voluntarily, but done compulsorily—Labor is cheated out of the only chance it has of obtaining economic freedom.

It behooves the toiling workingmen to discard the A.F. of L. organization for one which is based on sound economic principles. Sound principles are those which demand that the workingmen be given as their own what they produce, or the equivalent thereof, and are thereby guaranteed that they earn their living in their own way. Such a sound economic movement is at hand. The Industrial Workers of the World is the industrial, or union wing of this movement; the Socialist Labor Party is its political wing. The workingmen must take their places within these organizations.

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

Uploaded January 2010

slpns@slp.org