

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 9, NO. 67.

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 1908.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

BLOCKHEAD GOMPERS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

IN his *American Federationist* for this month President-Editor Samuel Gompers by the grace of the Civic Federation makes the statement that “the trade unions are the only organizations instituted by, for and directly governed by the wage workers for their own protection and advancement.”

This is a correct presentation of what the Trade Union should be, provided, of course, the passage “for their own protection and advancement” means the “protection and advancement” of the Working Class, not of a portion of the Working Class, who organize themselves in such way as to leave the large majority of their fellow wage slaves out in the cold. According to the tests laid down by Gompers himself, his A.F. of L., on the whole, does not deserve the name of “Trade Union.”

As to the test of a Trade Union being “instituted BY the wage workers”—it is a conservative estimate that 55 per cent of Gompers’s organizations are instituted BY and at the instigation and with the consent and approval of the employers, with Gompers as a willing figure-head, the said Unions being but buffers for the scheming employer to have all the freer a hand.

As to the test of a Trade Union being “instituted FOR the wage workers”—it is a conservative estimate that 75 per cent of Gompers’s organizations are instituted FOR others than wage workers. The 55 per cent first named are instituted FOR the employers directly and incidentally for the labor fakir; while the remaining 25 of that 75 per cent are instituted directly FOR the labor fakir, and, as a matter of course, incidentally for the employer, without whose underground backing the fakir could not long exist.

As to the test of a Trade Union being “directly governed by the WAGE WORKERS”—it is a conservative estimate, and a consequence of the above figures, that 75 per cent of Gompers’s organizations are governed by the EMPLOYERS.

Finally, as to the test of a Trade Union being governed for “the protection and advancement” of the wage earners, the instance of the anthracite wing of Mitchell’s Union being kept on strike in 1902 mainly at the instigation of the bituminous mine-owners, who acted as financial secretaries to Mitchell’s Union by “checking off” the strike contributions of their bituminous employees, and who thereby made millions of dollars while the miners starved—that instance, furnished by the “most powerful” of the Gompers organizations, gives an inkling of how the others fare, and explains the activity of Mr. Easley of the Civic Federation in keeping, as he boasts, the bulk of the Gompers trade journals on his kindergarten benches.

It would have been money in Gompers’s pockets had the blockhead never been born.

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

Uploaded March 2010

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