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FIRST EDITORIAL

“IF.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

IT has been our constant endeavor to fix the attention of our readers upon the general movement of industrial concentration which has become in the last decade so marked a feature of capitalistic development. The reason for extending our scope of observation from the field of labor to the field of capitalism is, we trust, pretty well understood by this time. Not only in the ranks of the labor vanguard, but in the columns of labor organs more or less conservative, we find frequent evidences of the fact that this new departure in labor journalism is duly appreciated.

The workingmen of this country, as a rule, have therefore {heretofore?} been chiefly concerned in their own trade disputes, from which was evolved by some of their leaders the theory of trade unionism pure and simple, that “if” they were thoroughly organized in their respective trades, and furthermore strengthened by a federation of trades, they could enforce, with the strike and the boycott alone, any demand which on its face was right and reasonable; that in this manner they could, through successive concessions, reach a high plane of comfort and intelligence; and that the social problem could thus be solved without a resort to independent political action.

We might grant the possibility of such a thorough organization, and yet show, very conclusively, that it could not achieve any result of great or permanent value by operating in the economic field alone. But we need not waste time on this line of argument, for the possibility in question is a chimera.

Trade-unionism pure and simple is blind of one eye. With its good eye it sees that every one of its defeats is due to the intervention of “scabs”; that is, to the outflanking of its battalions by an army of unemployed men, driven by hunger to work at any price or on any conditions. With its bad eye it does not see where that army comes from, nor that

a still greater army is forming behind.

With its good eye it sees that every one of its victories is due to the thorough organization of its forces; that is, to the fact that there are few “scabs” in the trade that wins. With its bad eye it does not see that the only trades by which victories are won are those in which competition is still active among the employers of labor; nor does it see that such trades are becoming fewer and that in all the tendency to concentration, and to the consequent formation of a permanent reserve army of “scabs,” is manifest.

There is, of course, no man so blind as he who will not see. We do not expect, therefore, that the few leaders who find themselves quite comfortable in their blindness will open their bad eye to the portentous facts arrayed from week to week in the columns of *THE PEOPLE*. But the masses of organized workers are not so deaf as their leaders are blind, and loud are the facts as well as glaring.

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