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EDITORIAL

THE OPEN SHOP.

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IN the world of labor there is at present much perturbation and agitation. There is a sense of pending destruction and prospective injustices hanging over and disturbing the organizations in which the working class, wisely or unwisely, willingly or unwillingly, are interested. This is due to the general abandonment of arbitration in favor of the open shop by employers generally. Stripped of all the verbiage used to justify it, the open shop means non-unionism, and the unrestricted exercise of capitalist ownership and control which non-unionism implies. The open shop means not only non-unionism, but reduced wages, the introduction of the contract system, piece work and the premium plan, unrestricted output and apprentices, and the hiring and discharging of labor by means of bureaus organized by employers—in brief, the absolute control of labor without the intercession of so-called organized labor and labor leaders. The open shop means open warfare against “unionism” in all its phases.

This change of attitude toward “organized labor” by employers generally appears puzzling until the change of conditions in industry is considered. When arbitration was proposed, the American invasion of Europe had brought about a period of abnormal industrial activity in this country. The demand for labor was unusual and the opportunities for securing improved conditions by concerted action on the part of the workers were abundant. The late Mark Hanna recognized in these facts an element of danger to American supremacy and the consequent necessity of controlling the aspirations of the working class. He therefore organized his infamous Civic Federation, and, by means of it, secured control of the leaders of “organized labor,” which he and his class of ultra-capitalists, entrenched in power, to the great detriment of the manufacturers not lined up with him, and the working class. Arbitration was thus enthroned, in all its fraudulency. But now all this is

changed. At present there is no abnormal industrial activity. There is no great demand for labor, no opportunities to secure improved conditions. On the contrary, millions are now employed on reduced wages and time, while millions of others are not employed at all. Depression prevails, and the industrial pendulum has swung to the other extreme. Led by the manufacturing interests who suffered most from the workings of Hanna's Civic Federation—the so-called Parryites—the employers are hastening to utilize the opportunity offered by present conditions to throw off the now useless arbitration alliance with the “labor leaders” and to inaugurate the economic changes that will prove beneficial to them when industrial conditions will again compel them to resume that alliance. The open shop is thus the question of the day, with all that it implies.

The policy of the capitalists toward the laborers is undergoing a change in keeping with present conditions. And so is the policy of the “labor leaders.” Already they may be observed aiding the open shop, either by “masterly inactivity{,}” as in the case of Harry Korkowinski, alias White, of the Garment workers, or by advocating no opposition to it, as in the case of Theodore Shaffer, President of the Steel and Iron Workers. They will, as usual, be true to the capitalists and false to the laborers as of old.

It now remains for the working class to change its policy of mutual interests between capital and labor, which makes such traitorous acts and results possible, to a policy which recognizes what the open shop issue is now enforcing, viz., that the interests of capital and labor are antagonistic, that, consequently, there is an irrepressible struggle between them which can only terminate in the overthrow of the capitalist class and the triumph of the working class via Socialism. With adherence to such a policy the open shop would be a shop closed to capitalist ownership and control, and the struggle between capital and labor would be ended.

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