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EDITORIAL

EXHIBITING THEIR SHAME.

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TRADES unions have been marching, listening to speeches, passing resolutions on the dignity of labor, shouting defiance to the world, etc., for a goodly number of Labor Days, but they have marched no nearer a betterment of the conditions of the working class than that which existed when Labor Day was first graciously granted them by the capitalist class. It has lost all the significance it was supposed to possess when first instituted, and to-day is simply the annual Autumnal exhibit of political goods.

The men who walk in the ranks, the ranks of the toilers who produce all, upon whom the whole society is dependent for its existence, do not know why they march, or for what they march. But there are others who do know, and who take good care that this object is gained. The leaders of the pure and simple unions must show to the political leaders that there is a "union," that there is a body of men upon whom a little trading can be done. They must show that they control those "unions," and that for a consideration the "union" vote can be swung, not for the interests of the unions and unionism, but for the interests of the leaders.

The world has moved since these men last marched. The Billion Dollar Steel Trust can be launched, the Coal Trust has extended its operations, the Standard Oil Company has been able to pay enormous dividends, some of the banks have paid the largest dividends on record, "our exports" have increased, and the capitalist class has grown wealthier and more prosperous.

The capitalist class is few in numbers, and the persons who will be benefited by the above will not amount to 50,000 persons, all told.

During the same period the machinists were disastrously beaten. The San Francisco strikers were confronted by a crowd of armed thugs and forced to surrender. The Albany strike was broken at the point of the bayonet. Wholesale cut-downs and lockouts occurred in every part of the country. The working class has less than it had a year ago, and is confronted with the prospect of losing much of

what it now has.

The working class is the largest in the country. It has the skill, the experience, and the tireless energy that give to the capitalist class the enormous wealth it boasts. The American Federation of Labor, the men who will parade on September 2, claims to have over a million men organized. Its claim is a direct arraignment of itself. It is a confession of stupidity and impotence. An inert and lifeless giant has no claim to respect or consideration. The sum total of his power consists of his ability to infect.

Yet the giant has fought the pigmy, and the latter has stripped him of his wealth, and stretched him struggling in the dust. The American Federation of Labor has won nothing, done nothing, and is powerless to do anything for the welfare of the working class. On the contrary, it has done much that is detrimental to it, and now it parades its shame. A million men organized and every battle has been lost! A million men organized and the workers powerless in the grasp of a puny and insignificant minority! The proof of this is so fresh in the memory of all that it causes a blush of shame to rise on the brow of every honest man.

Yesterday's papers contained the accounts of nearly fifty men killed while engaged in their day's labor. The marchers have sent committees to city, state, and national bodies to beg for laws for the protection of life and limb. They have been instrumental in having employers' liability laws passed, but they never can, so long as they continue in their present rut, have laws executed. While they are on inspection for the benefit of the capitalist politician, their fellow workers are slaughtered because the class that passes the laws does so in its own interest, and enforces them in its own interest.

The steel strike which is now dragging on to sure defeat for the strikers, is another illustration of the power of the million men organized into the pure and simple union. They find it impossible to obtain assistance, and when they seek it they are met with evasive words of encouragement, but nothing substantial is given. The defeat of the steel workers shows the utter futility of massing men in a position where they will be hewn down. The leaders of the pure and simple unions lead the men into the defile, and there they are hopeless and helpless against the enemy. Retreat means that they will be trampled to death—as is exemplified whenever there is a stampede of strikers back to work. An advance means that they will be met with all the power and all the resources of an enemy that occupies a position that is impregnable in all directions, excepting one—the political.

The pure and simple unions scorn politics—when politics means something for the working class. The pure and simple union prates about the brotherhood of capital and labor—and is trounced every day by its “brother.” The pure and simple union boasts of what it has won—but keeps secret the fact that it has lost every strike of any moment that has been entered upon this past year. Its record is a record of cowardice, pusillanimity, and shame. It but adds to it by parading its numbers and thereby confessing its lack of power.

The Socialist Labor Party and the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance are needed more than ever. They must rescue their fellow workers from the quagmire, and must lead them to the field where they have a chance to win something. They must teach them that Socialism and Socialism only offers sure ground for the wage workers.

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