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EDITORIAL

FOR WHOM DID SHE SPEAK?

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE official bulletin for the ninth day of the Boston convention of the A.F. of L. quotes delegate Max S. Hayes as saying:

“Yes; the trades unions have increased wages of workmen.”

Delegates to representative bodies represent two constituencies, a narrow and a broader one. They represent the constituency that elects them, and they represent the whole element of which their own body is a constituent part. Being elected by the International Typographical Union, Max S. Hayes represented that body in the first instance; being elected to a convention of labor, he also represented Labor in general. Now, then, for whom did Mamie speak; did she speak for the compositors, or did she speak for Labor at large?

As to the compositors, the typesetting machine has made havoc among them. At one time able to earn as high as \$36 a week, that day has gone. To-day \$30 is the maximum. Nor is that all. A craftsman correspondent to the August number of the *Typographical Journal*, official organ of the International Typographical Union, records the following facts:

“It is doubtful to my mind if the world has gained anything from Mr. Mergenthaler’s invention, from a humanitarian point of view, because the increased mortality in our ranks since it was placed on the market is something appalling. With all the care that has been taken to select men who would be proof against the shocks which it administers to the nervous system, it has more victims to its credit than the four years of the civil war.”

In other words, and keeping in mind that the hours of work of the compositors have been reduced, it follows that the decline in their wages, absolute and relative, is such that their earnings have become utterly unequal to the waste of tissue in the

process of labor, so unequal that a devastating war of four years wrecked less lives than are wrecked in that industry, for one!—Obviously, Mamie did not speak for the Typographical Union when he {she?} declared the trades unions had increased the wages of workmen.

Did she, perhaps, speak for Labor at large? Let's see. Consulting another authoritative source, the Twelfth Census—a source whose sins would rather be on the side of Mamie's contention—we find the following entries:

For 1890—

“Average number of wage-earners (in manufacturing and mechanical industries)	4,251,613
“Total wages	\$1,891,228,321.”

For 1900—

“Average number of wage-earners (in manufacturing and mechanical industries).....	5,308,406
“Total wages	\$2,322,333,877.”

In other words, the average wages per workingman in 1890 was \$444.83, and in 1900 it amounted to only \$437.48,—a decline of \$7.35. Or, to put it still more plastically, while the new values produced by Labor in 1900 in the manufacturing and mechanical industries exceeded the new values produced by Labor in 1890 by nearly fifteen hundred million dollars, the share received by the workingman of the product of his own toil went down!—Obviously, again, Mamie was not speaking for Labor at large when she declared the trades unions had increased the wages of workmen.

Yet Mamie spoke. She must have spoken for someone. Who may that someone be?

When the labor-plundering capitalist speaks “for the people,” HE is the people: so when he says “the people are prosperous” he means himself. It is just so with the labor-fakir. When Mamie says the trades unions have increased the wages of the

workmen, she has herself and her breed in mind. And then she speaks truth. She has prospered by the pure and simple trades union. She raised her wages on her paper, the *Cleveland Citizen*, beyond what she could earn “at the case,” and she has since eked out her earnings by junketing trips (and perquisites) to Europe as “fraternal delegate,” etc., etc.,—all borne and made possible by the patient back of Labor, held numb and dumb in the pure and simple trades unions, of which the bogus Socialist, Max S. Hayes, is a beneficiary, and around which, like barn-cattle, she follows the sunshine while she feeds.

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