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EDITORIAL

## “NEUTRALITY IN TRADES-UNION FIGHTS”.

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**I**N its issue of the 16th of this month *The Worker* gives as the reason or excuse for its “not paying more attention to the Industrial Workers of the World” that its duty is “to serve the cause of Socialism” and not “to mix up in trade-union fights”. Seeing that *The Worker* is the English organ and private property, and its whole personnel the hired employes of the *Volkszeitung* Corporation, the conclusion is justified that the declaration of neutrality in “trade union fights”, made by *The Worker*, is a declaration of the policy of the Corporation itself.

When the K. of L. cigarmakers went on strike in New York and Philadelphia in the early Eighties, and the A.F. of L., or strictly speaking, the Gompers-Strasser cigarmakers, scabbed it upon the strikers and helped the employers to roll the K. of L. men in dust, the *Volkszeitung* whooped it up for the Gompers-Strasser Union, and heaped denunciations on the K. of L.—Was that “neutrality in trade-union fights”?

Perhaps that is only “ancient history”. Let us come down to more recent dates.

When, in 1898, the A.F. of L. cigarmakers struck against the S.T. and L.A. cigarmakers in the Seidenberg shop, and then “composed” their differences with the employer with a contract by which the employer agreed to lockout the S.T. and L.A. men and the A.F. of L. Union agreed, AT THAT PRICE, to work at lower wages and worse conditions; and when the rank and file of the A.F. of L. cigarmakers Union, upon returning to work, discovered the sellout and sent their protest to the *Volkszeitung*, that paper suppressed their letters, while it gave full space to the other side.—Was that neutrality in “trade-union fights”?

When, the same year, the Hebrew Typographical Union scabbed it upon the S.T. and L.A. pressmen in the Lipshitz shop, and gave as their reason that they had been ordered to do so by the local organizer of the A.F. of L. Big 6, the *Volkszeitung*

again suppressed all protest from the aggrieved side.—Was that neutrality in “trade-union fights”?

When a year later, in 1899, the officials of the A.F. of L. cigarmakers Union endeavored to repeat the Seidenberg shop infamy at the Davis shop, and, in the teeth of an overwhelmingly contrary vote by the shop men, and despite the shop’s being an open shop, as their own signatures attest, presumed to declare a strike against the shop, and the S.T. and L.A. Union men refused to abide by such autocratic and fraud-contemplating order; when that “trade-union fight” was on, both the *Volkszeitung*, and the predecessor of *The Worker*—an English paper that the Corporation had hurriedly set up under the piratical name of “The People”, and which, while the fraud lasted, was generally known as “The Bogus” in order to distinguish it from the genuine article, *The People*—both those organs of the *Volkszeitung* Corporation echoed the calumnies of the A.F. of L. Union, and had nothing but abuse for the other Union, the S.T. and L.A.—was that “neutrality in trade-union fights”?

Even these instances, though surely not “ancient history”, may be considered old, being “of the last century”. Let us come down to this century.

In 1901 the S.T. and L.A. machinists had a strike in Bloomfield, N.J. The O’Connell or Warner, that is, the A.F. of L. Union, sought to interfere. In the course of that “trade-union fight”, the present *Worker* came out with a broadside against the S.T. and L.A. men on strike. It claimed to have “inside information”. A denial, pointed and categorical, of the charges made by *The Worker* was drawn up by the Bloomfield employes involved, S.T. and L.A. men and non-S.T. and L.A. men; it was signed by all, nearly two hundred of them, and sent to *The Worker*. The answer was a fresh insult, accompanied with the promise to look further into the matter and report thereupon, but suppressing the protest itself. Although repeatedly called upon to give the results of its promised investigation, *The Worker* has remained silent up to this date, leaving its calumnies unretracted.—Was that “neutrality in trade-union fights”?

Later still, when the Niedermeyer labor-lieutenants for the brewery bosses in the brewery Union conspired with the brewery bosses to put through a contract that left the rank and file tied hands and feet at the mercy of the employer, a serious

“trade-union fight” broke out in the brewery Unions. Sufficient facts had leaked through, despite all the secrecy observed, and the rank and file began to ask questions. To ask questions and demand reasons was like shaking the very foundation of belief. Such “insubordination” the Niedermeyer labor leaders would not brook. They fined the impertinent questions-askers. These, in the innocence of their hearts, turned to the *Volkszeitung* Corporation papers with the request for space. The request was denied. While the Niedermeyer side was allowed column upon column to chloroform the rank and file, the columns of *The Worker* and the *Volkszeitung* remained hermetically sealed to the poor and victimized Valentine Wagners, who thereupon, as our readers know, turned to the Socialist Labor Party press and there found open forum. Thus matters went on in the *Volkszeitung* until the infamous contract was jammed through, whereupon immediately the *Volkszeitung* appeared in all the glory of nearly two columns of new brewery bosses’ advertisements!—Presumably this is a sample of “neutrality in trade-union fights”!

Still more recently in the spring of this very year, a “trade-union fight” broke out between the conductors and motormen of the Belmont lines in this city, on the one hand, and Belmont, Gompers, Grand-Chief Stone, Superlative-Something Mahon and Morris Braun, on the other. Such was the neutrality observed by *The Worker* and the *Volkszeitung* in the course of that “trade-union fight”, that the reporter for the two papers, was, together with the reporter for Hearst’s paper, kicked out of their meeting by the indignant men on strike, the men involved in that “trade-union fight”.

Still more recently, the I.W.W. having in the meantime sprung into existence, *The Worker* of last August 19 referred editorially to the new Union as “so-called ‘industrialists’” and “S.L.P. disrupters”.—Was that “neutrality in trade-union fights”?

Finally, coming down to the freshest date possible, the very *Worker* of this December 16th issue, the very issue that, on one page, makes the declaration of “neutrality in trade-union fights”, kicks itself to pieces on another page. An anonymous circular has recently appeared under the vague signature of “General Executive Board of the United Cloth Hat and Cap Makers of North America”, emptying upon the I.W.W. organization of that trade a slop-jar of defamatory

charges. *The Worker* of this 16th of December sums up these charges in the document, introducing them with this sentence of its own: “a statement against the organization which rather pompously styles itself the Industrial Workers of the World”; and, not satisfied with this sample of “neutrality”, and notwithstanding the fact that in the document itself the S.T. and L.A. is mentioned only once, and that respectfully, *The Worker* commits virtual forgery by squeezing in, as though part of the document which it is summing up, this sentence: “It is alleged that the I.W.W. is thus already practicing the same tactics which characterized the old S.T. and L.A., one of its constituent parts”—a sneaky falsification of the document. Nor yet is this all. While *The Worker* thus “summarizes” the assault of the A.F. of L. document; while it hastens to give publicity to the charges therein contained, together with some fabrication of its own; while it seeks to catch its readers’ eye with the catchy headline “Cap Makers Accuse I.W.W. of Scabbing”; and while it does all this upon the strength of an anonymous document, a document that bears no individual’s signature whatever of any one who could be held responsible for his acts;—while thus conducting itself, *The Worker* suppresses all mention of the short and terse answer made to the anonymous A.F. of L. document—an answer, be it noted, that bears the signature of W. Shurtleff, as National Organizer of the I.W.W., with his address attached; that challenges the anonymous publishers of the A.F. of L. document to make their charges under oath; that pledges a categorical denial under oath of the charges made; and that has been circulated broadcast in this city—while the paper puts on a show of “neutrality” by giving the minutes of the December 5 meeting of the N.Y. Industrial Council, I.W.W.; where the matter of the cap-makers is alluded to, but in which the Shurtleff denial could, as a matter of course, not have found space, seeing the document with the charges had not yet seen the light of day.—Weighing well such manoeuvres, especially in the light of the complete suppression by *The Worker* of the faintest allusion to the four giant I.W.W. mass meetings recently addressed by Debs in this city, an up-to-date illustration is furnished of “neutrality in trade-union fights”.

“Neutrality in trade-union fights”! Even a bowling-alley club may not always accomplish the feat, let alone a paper engaged in the Labor Movement. No more monstrous absurdity was ever born in the womb of folly, or more iniquitous

sophistry in the womb of treason to the Working Class. What the paper, that claims to be Socialist, means to effect behind that mask is not to avoid being a “tail to the kite of warring labor organizations”, as *The Worker* puts it, but to avoid being detected for what it is—a lackey of pure and simple.

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