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Caricatures.

By DANIEL DE LEON

More than once, and each time illustrating the statement with a fact, have we pointed out that the pure and simple trade union is not a labor organization but a caricature of capitalism. An incident during these war days helps prove the fact.

All intelligent observers know that the present war, with sympathy for Cuba as the pretext, is, among other things, but a method adopted by the Capitalist Class to ease up the congested labor market, and help to remove the stroke of apoplexy that the Nation is threatened with. The Capitalist Class realizes that capitalism is the cause of the congestion: the privately owned machinery of production displaces labor and brings on the congestion that threatens collapse. To remove the cause of the disease and place in the hands of the nation the machinery of production, is no part of the capitalist programme. No Class, conscious of its own interests, will cut its own throat. To propose the removal of the cause of the present convulsions that threaten society, would, on the part of the Capitalist Class, be tantamount with decreeing its own death. Intelligently, as a Class, it upholds the conditions for its existence; and not unintelligently, as a Class, it seeks to avoid the consequences of its own system, by letting its victims, the Working Class, bleed profusely. A war carries away members of the Working Class by the thousands; thus a war relieves the situation, at least for a time. A war is a not unintelligent Capitalist Class method to keep itself up.

Now what do we find many a pure and simple union doing? The congestion of the labor market through the displacement of labor by machinery that causes the Capitalist Class to tremble for its existence, has the effect of crowding down wages. The intelligent labor organization, New Trade Unionism, knows the reason thereof; and being class-conscious, it seeks to remove the evil by removing the cause: to place the machinery of production in the people's hands so that, instead of human beings being displaced, toil, hours of work, be thrown out, and more time be gained for the enjoyment of life. Not so the pure and simple, or British form of organization. With the

capitalists, it seeks to relieve the strain, and strains to uphold the cause; and—with the capitalists, it adopts a method that sacrifices its own class. Several of these pure and simple unions are now, not only shouting for war, but showing why they want war, to wit, to deplete the labor market; and, like the capitalists, they are offering inducements to their members to go to the war, which means, to betake themselves off, and leave their jobs to others, and thereby make the getting of a job and the keeping of it, when one is got, a little easier.

What the Capitalist Class seeks, the pure and simple union seeks also. But what the former seeks class-consciously, and, therefore, intelligently, the latter seeks class-unconsciously, and, therefore, as a caricature of the former.

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