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EDITORIAL

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

By DANIEL DE LEON

IN the correspondence column of this issue will be found a letter stating that President Shaffer's brother has been appointed to a job by the Governor of Pennsylvania; and our correspondent asks, What does this mean?

The fact is correctly stated. The June 4 issue of the *Amalgamated Journal*, organ of the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers, itself coolly makes the announcement in these words:

“President Shaffer's brother, Addison, has been appointed by Governor Pennypacker as one of the deputy factory inspectors for Western Pennsylvania.”

What does this mean? It means volumes.

Cardinals and Popes must not marry; hence they are not supposed to have children. The supposition notwithstanding, they do sometimes have them, occasionally in large numbers—as the sequel will show. When these children grow up they must be provided for. What is the use of having a papa high up in authority if he does not furnish his brood with comfortable berths? So thought the papas in question; and they appointed their children to places of honor and emolument around them; but seeing they could not acknowledge these appointees as their sons—at least not in public—, they called them their nephews, hence the term “nepotism”—the favoring of nephews (“nepos” latinice). Thus in the clerical hierarchy of celibatic brand.

There is another hierarchy, the “labor lieutenants of the capitalist class” hierarchy. These gentlemen render valuable services to individual capitalists, and to capitalism in general. If there is a capitalist crime against labor to be concealed or white-washed, such as crimes against factory laws; if there is a capitalist scheme

against labor to be fathered and smuggled in; if there is a resentment on the part of labor against capitalists to be run into the ground; if there is a bogus party of labor to be boomed in the endeavor to blanket a bona fide party of labor; in short, if there is any dirty work to be performed—there is the “labor lieutenant of the capitalist class,” ever ready and ever willing. But these are not yet the days of altruism. The “labor lieutenant” wants to know “the reason why.” Few if any are those of them who are not on the regular pension list of some employer or other. But that is not enough. Notoriously the capitalist is a miser. So our “labor lieutenants” demand more recognition. And the recognition comes. Seeing it would frequently be disastrous all around if the “labor lieutenant” himself took a political job, the same is given—to his brother, or his son, or his nephew, or his brother-in-law, according as the degree of relation may be that the dependent stand{s} in to the “labor lieutenant.”

“What does this mean?” It means a novel, up-to-date style of nepotism, one that, like charity, blesses him that takes and him that gives.

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