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EDITORIAL

GOMPERS' CLEVER HIT.

By DANIEL DE LEON

MR. Samuel Gompers, the representative of that “Labor principle” that holds that the interests of the Working Class and the Capitalist Class are mutual, realizing that his own *Federationist*¹ is too obscure an archive in which to register a “clever hit,” has rushed to his kindred of the capitalist press and is there declaring that the “Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance is a piratical concern,” and “a nuisance.” We regret that our capitalist adversaries got ahead of us in this. Had Mr. Gompers waited awhile, he would have seen his “clever hit” given the benefit of circulation in the now greedily and ever more greedily read Socialist Labor Party press. The “hit” is “clever.”

A “piratical concern!”—such was the angry term that irate England, placing one hand on one sore spot, another on another perhaps sorer spot, and wishing she had a score or two more hands to soothe as many other sore spots, cruelly, wickedly and outrageously inflicted upon her by John Paul Jones, applied to the daring navigator who helped free this country from British domination and laid the foundation for the American Navy.

John Paul Jones' craft was certainly piratical. For one thing, it was small, and did not compare in hull with the heavy British hulks of the “regular” British Navy. For another, it was quick of motion, rapid of action and unerring in its blows. It was a “nuisance”—just as Mr. Gompers pronounces the S.T. & L.A. It was one of those “nuisances” that are big with fate, that upset the equanimity of the powers to whom it is a “nuisance,” that turn their thoughts to “graves, to worms and epitaphs,” their minds “to choose executors,” their tongues “to talk of wills.” No wonder. The spirit of a dispensation now animates all such “nuisances” and “piratical concerns,” the breath of a higher principle directs their motion, the strength of advancing

¹ [*American Federationist*, official organ of the American Federation of Labor.]

civilization supports them.

Exactly so with the tiny craft of the S.T. & L.A.—which, by the way, we thought was “dead!” The Gompers system of Unionism, even if ever timely, has become a scab on the body social. If not removed, the scab will cause irritation, inflammation, and festering. If ever it had a star, that star has gone down. The Working Class demand organization: Gompersism stands in its way with its now-monstrosity of guilds as a substitute. The gallon-quantity of the Labor Movement overflows the petty pint-measure of Gompersism.

Gompersism, having become rotten-ripe for destruction, the “piratical concern” of an S.T. & L.A. is putting in its work to perfection. Like the “piratical concern” of John Paul Jones, the S.T. & L.A. is laying one of the cornerstones to a structure infinitely of vaster import to the human race than the socio-political structure of an independent America, one of whose cornerstones was laid by the “piratical concern” of John Paul Jones.

For once, the dull Gompers did make a clever hit.

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

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