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EDITORIAL

PURE AND SIMPLE WEAPONS.

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A strike tests the methods of a union, and if those methods uniformly prove futile, the conclusion is inevitable that they are wrong. Nobody can doubt for an instant that the working class has courage, fortitude, patience, endurance and intelligence of a high order. A union goes into a fight aware of the fact that the good of the men is pitted against the profits of the boss. They also know that the wages formerly received had to be consumed; but what they do not understand is that the employer has not been forced to spend all his profits, and that the sum total of his savings is one of the things against which they pit their chances of misery and their poverty.

The strike in itself is often only the first step in a series of mistakes, and as those mistakes develop, the completely vicious inefficiency of the pure and simple union is brought to light. Men may strike, and men may boycott, but whether they do or do not strike or boycott, is a matter they can often decide for themselves. The matter of eating is ever present, and no decision on the part of the men can render it anything else.

The strike to-day is against a solid, well-organized, powerful mass of capital. This potent enemy is met with weapons that were of use years ago, but became useless as soon as the enemy, against which they were potent, developed to its present perfection. In the course of a strike, the boycott steps in to its aid, but in the face of modern industry, the boycott is even weaker than the strike alone.

The industries that supply the necessities of life are in the trusts, and if a union attempts to prevent the sale of coal, of meat, or of food products, it simply prevents the people from eating, or else its efforts are lost. If the mines of one portion of Pennsylvania are under the ban, the mines of another portion will make good the deficiency. When the packing houses in Chicago are tabooed, and the journals of the American Federation of Labor tell their readers that they are not to patronize the products, the packing houses of Omaha or of Kansas City come to the rescue, and the same journals which do not patronize in one city, contain advertisements of the

goods which are produced in another city by the same trust.

The farce of the boycott has been played repeatedly, and each reproduction was on a lower and more degraded scale. A trust cannot be boycotted. It would not be worthy the name of a trust if it could. Its development places it in a position where it cannot be assailed by the old methods. It is entrenched against every move that may be made against it on the industrial field, unless that attempt is accompanied by a parallel attack upon another stronghold of the trust, the government that protects and fosters it.

It is possible to injure the trade of a pushcart banana-king, or a one-room delicatessen baron, by interdicting them. They have a limited trade, and they carry on their operations within a limited territory. Their customers are not many, and those customers could be supplied by walking a few doors farther down, and entering the store of another prince of the variegated sausage. The small businessman can be affected by the boycott. The boycott was of importance when the small businessman was of importance. When he ceased to be a person of moment, when he became a relic of bygone days, the boycott was sapped of all its strength, rendered useless by new conditions, and should be relegated to the rear.

It can no more affect the trust than the corner grocer can affect it. The power of the industrial combination lies in the fact that it is a thoroughly modern institution, and is a marked indication of the progress we have made. It is rendered vicious, not by its size, its power, its ability to eliminate waste, its aptitude to concentrate and amalgamate or its proneness to make all government subservient to its needs, but it is criminal because it is in the hands of a limited number of individuals. The boycott seeks to attack it at its most unassailable points, and would deprive society of the advantages that have been gained by the advent of the trust.

Each attack made, each attempt made to restrict the trust, either in the matter of its size, or in its sales, proves abortive. The trust controls a line of goods needed by all men. It is impossible to stand between it and its market. If the outlet is blocked in one direction, it opens up another. All attempts to tie up the Standard Oil Company were futile, because the company recognized the fact that if it had the crude product, it had everything else. When a boycott was declared, it simply started an independent concern, held back its own oil and allowed the independent company to do a lucrative business for a short time, and at an advanced price. Then it killed its own offspring, and became the gigantic octopus again. Those who tried to boycott it only gave it an excuse for making more money.

The fights, which the labor unions have had on, the industrial field, all tended to strengthen the trust. Where they could boycott with results, they usually killed those against whom they warred. This happened only when their opponents were weak, and each death of this character makes succeeding attempts more difficult, because they throw into the hands of the trust the power that the small man formerly drew from his limited market.

It must be recognized that the labor unions do not fight a single man, or a small and sickly business concern. They are forced to go into the field against the trust, because business to-day is in the hands of the trusts. As they are labor saving combinations, it would be criminal to make any move against their abolition, or seek to throw them back. We must fight them on their own ground, and as they have organization, force and all modern equipments, we must acquire the same weapons, or we shall fail.

The pure and simple union, depending on the boycott, has remained in the way of the working class too long. The first step toward the control of the trust will be to abolish the pure and simple union, and the carrying on of the fight with a political organization. With this, we have everything that the trust has, and more. We have the working class, numerous and intelligent, and with men who stand for the working class in office, we shall be able to carry the trust still further, develop it, and use it for the good of society.

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