

EDITORIAL

“DISEMBOWELING” LABOR.

By DANIEL DE LEON

TOM WATSON's *The Jeffersonian* lets up a moment in its November 25th issue on “that filthy, pernicious book, Bebel's *Woman Under Socialism*,” to take a fall out of the workingman. The trick is attempted by an attempted parallel between the “blacklist” and the “boycott.”



THOMAS E. WATSON
(1856–1922)

The Jeffersonian reasons as follows: “What is the blacklist? The corporation gets a grudge against you and discharges you: it does not want you to get another job: it, therefore, follows you up; and, if you obtain another position, it notifies the employing corporation that you are on their blacklist,—that you are a dangerous man and ought to be discharged. You are, accordingly, fired. You go to another corporation and get another job. By the same process you are fired again. This happens to you again and again, until you are finally convinced that they are all dead against you, and that you can not get work anywhere.” Having described the blacklist in that way, *The Jeffersonian* proceeds to describe the boycott as a process in which the Union treats a corporation in the way the corporation treated the workman, until the corporation can not manufacture and sell goods. And the paper concludes from this that “there is not the least bit of difference in the principle of the thing”; “The blacklist is simply the corporation's method of boycotting the undesirable workman,” while the boycott is simply the workman's method of blacklisting the corporation.

The presentation of the case is structurally false, because essentially defective.

The Jeffersonian omits important features of the blacklist, features without which the process of the blacklist could not be set in motion. The blacklist is a

sentence, pronounced upon a workingman by a court in the electing of which the workingman had no hand, and after a trial in which he was not present, and at which he was not confronted by the witnesses against him. Moreover, in order for such a court to exercise its blacklisting functions the condemned man must be a helpless being by reason of his being plundered of the fruit of his labor by the very court that passes sentence upon him. The boycott, on the contrary, is not a final affair. It is an incident in a struggle. It is a move that contemplates negotiations, treaty and settlement. The blacklist is an act of punishment; the boycott is a manoeuvre for redress. The blacklist is final; the boycott temporary. The blacklist is an act of persecution, the boycott a measure of war.

When a populist employer of labor pretends that the boycott, set in motion against his class by its employes, is exactly like the blacklist inflicted by his class upon a workman, we but have a latter day explanation of the correct instinct that kept the working class from taking stock in populist professions of love and affection for Labor. When, moreover, a paper that names itself after Jefferson is seen justifying the blacklist by paralleling it with the boycott, we have a prime illustration of the hypocritical pretensions of the bourgeois to Jefferson as their patron saint.

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