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EDITORIAL

“FROM OUR FRIENDS DELIVER US!”

By DANIEL DE LEON

“**F**ROM our friends deliver us!”

Such is due soon to become the motto of the A.F. of L. misleaders of labor. Friends are all right in their place, and we are never averse to turning a quiet trick for them, sub rosa. But when they shower upon us praises which become in our enemies' hands swords to smite us, it is time to cry Easy! So are thinking Gompers, Mitchell, Mahon, Tobin, et al.

And well they may. It is frightful the way these friends of theirs have been cutting up.

Said William H. Taft, addressing the annual meeting of the National Civic Federation, last December: “Time was when everybody who employed labor was opposed to the labor union; when it was regarded as a menace. That time, I am glad to say, has largely passed away, and the man to-day who objects to the organization of labor should be relegated to the last century. It has done marvels for labor and will doubtless do more. It will, I doubt not, avoid the reduction to a dead level of all workingmen.”

Said that same Taft, now President, while addressing a meeting in Chicago on September 16, this year: “There is one thing to be said in respect to American trades unionism that its critics are not generally alive to. In France the trades unions are intensely Socialistic. Indeed, in some of the late difficulties it was plain that there was a strong anarchistic feeling among them and that they opposed all authority of any kind. It is also plain that the tendency toward Socialism in England and England's trade unionism is growing stronger and stronger. I need not point out the deplorable results in this country if trades unionism became a synonym for Socialism. Those who are now in active control of the Federation of Labor and all the great railroad organizations, have set their faces like flint against the

propagandism of Socialistic principles."

Pope Leo XIII., in his Encyclical on "The Condition of the Laboring Classes," advocated the formation of workingmen's unions "to better the condition, both of families and individuals; to infuse a spirit of equity in the mutual relations of employers and employed; to keep before the eyes of both classes the precepts of duty and the law of the Gospel."

Said Potter Palmer: "For ten years I made as desperate fight against organized labor as was ever made by mortal man. It cost me considerably more than a million dollars to learn that there is no labor so skilled, so intelligent, so faithful as that which is governed by an organization whose officials are well-balanced, level-headed men. I now employ none but organized labor and never have the least trouble, each believing that the one has no right to oppress the other."

Said the late Bishop Potter: "Organization, co-ordination, co-operation are the right of every body of men whose aims are worthy and equitable, and must needs be the resource of those who, individually, are unable to persuade their fellow men to recognize the justice of their claims and principles. If employed within lawful and peaceful limits, it may rightly hope to be a means of educating society in a spirit of fairness and practical brotherhood."

Said Melville E. Ingalls, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Big Four Railroad: "For thirty-five years of my life I have been what you might call a large employer of labor, as a railroad manager. I have seen these modern conditions grow up under my eye. My first experience was in controlling a railroad of 175 miles and three or four hundred employes. I knew every man on the road: I could call him by name and shake hands with him, and we could make all the trade agreements we needed between hours. There was no trouble. If anybody had a grievance, he could come in to see the 'Old Man,' and the door was always open. When I left the active management of the road we had some 7,000 miles of railroad and some 30,000 employes, and the man who worked on the railroad would have stood just as much chance to see any one with his grievance as he would to get into the kingdom of heaven. His only chance was to join an organization and deal through committees. We were always in favor of that; in fact, it seems to me that your trade agreement is just as much a protection to capital as to labor."

Said the late Senator M.A. Hanna: "Don't organize for any other purpose than mutual benefit to the employer and the employe. Don't organize in the spirit of antagonism; that should be beneath your consideration. If you are the stronger or the abler, much less excuse you have to show resentment because the other side is simply asking that they have their share. If we can by any method establish a relation of mutual trust between the laborer and the employer, we shall lay the foundation stone of a structure that will endure for all time. It is all wrong to suppose that the laboring element of this country is not ready and willing to join in this movement. I speak from experience. I have found the labor organizations ready and willing to go more than half way."

Said William E. Gladstone: "Trade unions are the bulwarks of modern democracies."

Such talk might do very well while Socialism was still a struggling thing and the surest way to earn an orchestra seat in the heaven of Law and Order was to decry it. But in these days, when the workers are catching onto the fakirs and their false pretense of "identity of interest"; in these days when Gompersism is being hooted from America to Europe and back again; in these days when, in short, the workers are in increasing numbers determining to have Socialism, and if any man or thing is a barrier in the way, so much the worse for him and it—in such days such talk is dangerous. It is worse. It is ungrateful and unpatriotic.

Hence the wail of "From our friends deliver us," soon due to go up from 801 G Street, Washington, D.C.

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

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