

# DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 11, NO. 181.

NEW YORK, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 28, 1910.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

## TOBINISM-CAPITALISM.

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**T**HE conduct of the A.F. of L. Boot & Shoe Workers Union, that is, Tobin's Union, in furnishing "Union" scabs to the shoe manufacturers of this vicinity whose men are on strike must not be considered a move for which Tobin is individually only responsible. How responsible the whole A.F. of L. is for such conduct, and how much lies in it, may be judged from the following passage in a speech in which Tobin addressed the late A.F. of L. St. Louis Convention, and which carried the motion then before the house.

The subject being the threatened secession of certain elements whom the A.F. of L. policy was not suiting, John Tobin said as follows:

"Too much consideration was given to secessionists. We were too easy with them, and it was taken as a weakness. We have in the shoe workers some few secessionists too. It is not a question of numbers but of principle. I say, draw {a} line on secession, in any form or for any excuse, and you will serve notice on secessionists of any kind."

When Tobin uttered these words he let a whole litter of cats out of the bag.

The posture of the A.F. of L. is that it has a monopoly of the word "Unionism," and, having said monopoly, it feels it can commit any amount of treason to the word under its cloak. The A.F. of L., stupid tho' its leaders may be, realize that there is not jobs enough to go around. Concentration of capital makes impossible a job for all the proletarians. If, then, a few proletarians, few enough to obtain jobs, are organized under the sacred shield of Unionism, the rest may secede, and the sooner they do the better it suits the A.F. of L. To the injury of their being driven out of the organization, the insult can then be added of their being "Anti-Union," and the hostility of the blind can thus be enlisted against them.

This is the view expressed in terse language by Tobin. And that view amounts

to this: The Workingmen are to be drawn into the A.F. of L. Unions: there they are to be contracted with the employer out of their birthright. And the contract, beneficent for the Labor-lieutenant, can be safely enforced. The moment the men in such a Union threaten secession, they can be told: "Secede and be damned, there are enough unemployed even hungrier than the seceders, and they will be but too ready to be 'Unionized.'" In other words, and again, Tobin's words mean that the marrow having been sucked out of one set of Union men beyond the point of endurance, they are to be "given the boots"—just as the capitalist employer "gives the boots" to the workers he has used up.

The capitalist gives the workers the choice between starvation and starvation wages: the A.F. of L., as the agent of capitalism puts the same sentiments in the statement: "Serve notice upon secession of any kind," and it utters the sentiment through the mouth of John Tobin.

For the frankness of the statement, many thanks.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.  
Uploaded November 2011

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