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SECOND EDITORIAL

Modesty Brought to Perfection.

By DANIEL DE LEON

A memorial was recently addressed to Congress that is a model of modesty. It was signed by Messrs. Gompers, O'Connell, Lennon and McGuire, it purported to voice the sentiments of the American working people, and it humbly suggested four points: the restriction of immigration, the reform of the banking system, river and harbor appropriations, and the eight-hour day.

The first demand meant that the "leaders" desired a job or two, or possibly three, as twenty-second assistant bottle-washers to some Commissioner of Immigration. That wages cannot go up when each machine introduced into the shop throws more men out of work and into the labor market than does a whole shipload of immigrants cannot have escaped Messrs. Gompers, Lennon, O'Connell and McGuire; it is a fact that has brought home to them painful experiences; it has thinned out their unions, depleted their treasuries and made the life of a labor fakir a precarious affair. Dull though these gentlemen are known to be, the inefficiency of anti-immigration measures has by this percolated through their wool. They don't expect anything from it. They abandon the great hopes once entertained on that score, and now modestly beg for a few dry bone jobs.

The second demand is an evidence of still greater modesty, even of humility. During the late Presidential campaign these gentlemen warbled in chorus the praises of the sixteen-to-one deity, and impassionately, during their sober intervals, invoked the advent of the Sixteen-to-one Messiah as the only possible savior of an otherwise ruined nation. When they now lower their tune to a bank reform, they mean to convey to the Federal Government intimation that they abandon their former attitude, and that Uriah Heep is not a circumstance to them.

Even more yielding in its modesty is the third demand for river and harbor appropriations. These appropriations have gained an established reputation in the land. No one, who knows anything, ever thinks of them but in connection with boodle

for bankrupt politicians. Indeed, the river and harbor appropriations have become the haven of refuge for all such politicians. If they have failed in everything else, there always are the river and harbor appropriations to fall back upon. In making this third demand, our labor fakir quartet simply meant to wink their eyes to the Federal Officers, and thereby eloquently indicate that the quartet appreciated the trials of politicians and would not stand between them and a little comfort.

Finally, the fourth demand is modesty and gentleness personified. The eight-hour law, together with the whole legislation thereon, has become a pretty rattle to entertain the dues-paying rank and file with. By its means the labor fakirs could get “expenses” from the treasury of the unions for lobbying-junketing expeditions, and the capitalists and politicians could be afforded an unequalled opportunity to pose as labor’s friends by making pretty speeches that never materialized into effective law. The eight-hour law is a pretty ball used in the game of tennis, at which fakirs and politicians love to play, and which the workers pay for.

Pure and Simpledome has reached a point where it offers all the contrast one can want between its own cowardice and the bravery of New Trade Unionism.

[Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.](#)

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