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EDITORIAL

## DEMONSTRATING ITS INEFFICIENCY.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**T**HE convention of the pure and simple A.F. of L., at Scranton, seems to have been purposely called to demonstrate the uselessness to the laboring class of that “great organization.”

First the numbers given out by its “leaders” show its inability to organize the entire working class or even a large fraction thereof.

These leaders claim a membership of 1,503,000. As THE PEOPLE has before demonstrated, these figures are a mammoth lie as to the real membership.

In 1890, according to the estimate of Lucien Sanial, the number of wage-workers of this country was 15,064,988. In 1880, the number was 11,728,603. Thus there was an increase of 3,336,385 in 1890. Figuring a proportionate increase for 1900, it will be readily seen that the pretended membership of the A.F. of L. is about one-fifteenth of the entire number of wage-workers.

But this is not all. Even this one-fifteenth cannot be regarded as a unit. The members composing it are divided into factions that nullify the object of their organization. They scab it on one another in order that the influence and power of their “leaders” may be maintained. This the struggle for so-called trade-autonomy too plainly demonstrates.

Second, the address of its blatant and bombastic Gompers reveals the fact that the A.F. of L. is unable to keep step and cope with the development of capitalism. It cries aloud, through him, against the employment of children, and says that in “our day of the wonderful productive forces of steam and electricity” there “is not even a semblance of an excuse to exploit the labor of children.” Likewise, does it cry for the organization of women, whose continued increase in commerce, industry and office work has long been noted with solicitous care—if Gompers is to be believed.

Could anything more damaging to the character of an organization be cited

than these facts? Women and children toil because their natural protectors, the men, are unable to provide for them. Here, then, comes an organization,—which is continually claiming to have heaped untold benefits on the adult male working class both in and outside of its membership: increasing wages, shortening hours, decreasing unemployment, securing beneficial legislation, etc., etc.,—admitting that child labor flourishes and the employment of women increases.

Surely, the workingmen of America were brutes indeed, did they add to these munificent benefits the wages they receive from the women and children of their families. But those familiar with the many disastrous strikes of the past year, especially that of the steel workers, will know that the workingmen of America never received such benefits, and that their women and children must seek employment because of that fact.

Third, having thus proved its economic impotency, the convention also took pains to prove its political impotency, by exposing the uselessness and fraudulent character of its legislation, past and proposed.

Edward F. Sweeney, a former “labor leader,” now deputy commissioner of immigration at the Port of New York, at the session of Friday, December 6th, testified to the non-effectiveness of the immigrant and alien labor contract laws.

Said he: “The spirit of the immigration laws is being violated by the wholesale.” In substantiation of this statement he recalled the railroad wreck in Michigan the week before, in which a large number of immigrants were killed, and asserted that they were no doubt under contract to work in California.

Again he said: “Labor contractors are perfecting their methods for the bringing of aliens in this country and the Bureau of Immigration is not extended.”

In view of these admissions, one is inclined to ask: Of what use then is the so-called “political influence exerted by organized labor in behalf of beneficial legislation?”

Here is a high labor-fakir and immigration authority showing that train loads of immigrants are sent across the continent in direct violation of the immigrant and alien-contract labor laws; and yet the convention of which he is a member is littered with resolutions demanding the enactment of more stringent immigration and alien contract labor laws, not to mention the re-enactment and extension of a certain exclusion act.

Why is this? Surely no sane body of delegates believes after such a demonstration that labor can be helped by more valueless laws. Surely there is no process by which the continued multiplication of bad acts will work good, legislatively speaking?

The object is clearly revealed in Sweeney's concluding words in the last quotation from his statement above: "and the Bureau of Immigration is not extended."

The enactment of the legislation demanded per resolution and "the political influence exerted by organized labor," would "extend the work of the Bureau of Immigration"—would in other words, provide offices for the labor fakirs who have proven their fealty to capitalist interests, by bamboozling and betraying the working class by the advocacy of such legislation through such means.

There is but one remedy for such a condition of affairs. That is the organization of labor according to the principles of the S.T. & L.A. and the S.L.P.

With such organization labor would march to victory on both the economic and political fields.

Let us strengthen and build up both organizations to the best of our combined abilities. On with the good work!

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