

# Craft Unionism and the New Movement

By Michael T. Berry

**S**TARTING with the proposition, that the historic mission of the working class is the overthrow of the political state, and the substitution of the Industrial Republic of Labor, the world's workers must be made to understand that they must part with the past.

"New occasions teach new duties. Time makes ancient good uncouth. We must ever up and onward who would keep abreast of truth."

Nowhere is the sense of these lines more obvious than when applied to the efforts of the working class on the industrial field.

To any one whose intellect enables them to reason intelligently from cause to effect, one thought above all others is clearly manifest; that the pure and simple craft union with its methods and spirit are in the daily warfare on the industrial field, as ineffective as the bow and arrow of the savage when pitted against the modern machine gun.

Craft unionism, whether it be the A. F. of L. or the host of independent unions organized in opposition to the rule of Gompers & Co., accepts the wage system and its accompaniment, the Political State, as finalities.

From the false premises of pure and simple, or craft terrorism all sorts of false teachings are given to the rank and file of the working class by these capitalist Job Trusts with the result that in the English speaking world, at least, the economic organization of labor reminds one of the story of the building of the tower of Babel, when one asked for one tool he was handed another with the result that the end was confusion worse confounded.

Craft unionism started with capitalism and it sings the same song today, when capitalism has grown to giant stature, that it sang in the valleys of Lancashire when the giant of today was a puling infant "A fair days wage for a fair days work" was its shibboleth then and is now, it regards that as the alpha and omega of the endeavors of the working class.

The cornerstone in the edifice of craft unionism is "Fight capital with capital" "Keep Politics out of the Union" "Capital and Labor are Brothers" "Capital is entitled to its share" "There is an aristocracy of Labor."

On this false foundation Gompers' castle rests. From these false principles have come all the false teachings which have caused the workers to wend their way from the cradle to the grave, through a valley of tears.

No analysis of these "principles" is necessary here. Suffice it to say that the proof of the pudding is to be found in the eating, and when the workers, 52% of whom according to the U. S. Industrial Commission's Report of 1916 earned \$10.00 per week or less, are asked to "fight capital with capital" it looks as though the one who proposes such a scheme was a combination of fraud and fool. Mostly fraud. It is equally fraudulent to say "Keep Politics out of the Union" because it is clear enough to the intelligence of a child that either the politics of the Boss or the politics of our class *must* be in the union all the time.

To say that "Capital and Labor are Brothers," is to assume that he who listens is a fool. The brotherhood is of the Cain and Abel kind. There is a red streak around the globe traced in the blood of one of these "Brothers" spilled by the other.

To say that "The capitalist is entitled to his share" is pure "bunk" whatever might have been said when the capitalist acted the part of a worker either as a foreman or director of industry, that cannot be said today. Today all big industries are organized on the lines of joint stock companies or trusts, and the capitalist performs no kind of useful work. He is like a flea on the back of a dog, he simply absorbs, sponges like, "his share" of the surplus value wrung from the brain and brawn of brutalized and ensnared labor.

There is no "aristocracy of labor," craft unionism notwithstanding. But in attempting the application of that theory the workers are kept divided into small crafts with their separate "sacred" scabby contracts which render defeat the necessary accompaniment of their efforts to improve their conditions.

Is it any wonder that in the face of such a suicidal and criminal program as is undeniably the program of Gompers and Company, is it any wonder that each succeeding census in this country from 1870, has revealed the fact that the conditions of the working class is absolutely and relatively declining?

Was not the late Mark A. Hanna, one of the most notorious, as well as the vilest outragers of labor in America in his day, right, when at a meeting of the Civic Federation in New York City he entered with Gompers on one arm, and John Mitchell on the other and introduced these worthies to his brother outrager and exploiter of labor, Seth Low, as "My trusted Labor Lieutenants?"

As long as the working class clings to craft unionism such leaders are a necessary consequence. It breeds them as a Jersey swamp breeds mosquitoes. It is inescapable, and the emancipation of the working class is impossible because they benumb the mind of the worker and disgrace the working class in the eyes of its enemies.

No man or set of men is ever respected until he or they first respect themselves. That respect once wrung from the foe the battle is half won.

But "the world do move," and Gompers and his troglodyte institution must go, they cannot secure a vote of confidence from labor except by fraud, and false pretence. In the place of this miserable program which has put crepe on the door knobs of the working class, the Industrial union must rise. "One great union of the working class." Industrial unionism represents the intelligent and civilized expression of the American working class and it gives its program to the world in these words:

"The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found amongst millions of working people and the few who make up the employing class have all the good things of life.

"Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the toilers come together on the political field under the banner of a distinct revolutionary political party governed by the working class interests and on the industrial field under the banner of one great industrial union to take and hold all means of production and distribution and to run them for the benefit of all.

## The Background of the German Revolution

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perialism—she will lose both her objects; but if she concentrates on internal development now, she will secure her second victory later.

"The war will last long and Imperialism will finally be unmasked completely, on both sides. The example of the Russian Revolution will continue to inspire the peoples of the world, and its influence will be enormous. On the one side will be the bourgeois system and war for conquest waged by two imperialistic groups, on the other peace and the Socialist Republic.

"The reorganization of Russia, based on the dictatorship of the proletariat, the nationalization of banks and of big industry, the exchange of products of the cities with the co-operatives of small peasants, is economically quite feasible, provided we have a few months to devote to the job. Such an organization will make Socialism unconquerable in Russia, and will provide a permanent basis for the formation of a powerful red army of peasants and workers."

The Lenin conception conquered; and the All-Russian Soviet Congress in March, 1918, ratified the Brest-Litovsk peace.

Brest-Litovsk marked the first break in the imperialistic war, and was a great contributing factor to the coming of peace. If Soviet Russia had continued the war it would have meant the triumph of the counter-revolution and Capitalism; and the German proletariat, surrounded on all sides by capitalist nations prepared to cut the throat of their revolution, would have hesitated. But, with a Socialist Russia prepared to assist, a tremendous ideologic impulse was given to the coming of the German revolution. Moreover, while the Bolsheviki ceased the military war against Germany, they continued the class war of revolutionary propaganda, smuggling agents and literature into Germany urging a proletarian revolution. The Bolsheviki Ambassador to Berlin, Joffe, was the centre of the revolutionary propaganda, using his "diplomatic couriers" to bring into Germany money and literature for the use of the revolutionary Socialists. The class war was waged by Soviet Russia, in Germany and all Europe, the struggle for the international proletarian revolution.

"The rapid gathering of wealth and the centering of the management of industry into fewer and fewer hands make the trade unions unable to cope with the ever growing power of the employing class because the trade union fosters a state of things which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another in wage wars.

"The trade unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers into the belief that the working class have interests in common with their employers."

"This sad conditions must be changed, the interests of the working class upheld, and while the capitalists rule still prevails all possible relief for the workers must be secured. That can only be done by an organization aiming steadily at the complete overthrow of the capitalist wage system and formed in such a way that all its members in any one industry or in all industries necessary cease work whenever a strike or lockout is on in any department thereof thus making an injury to one an injury to all."

This intelligent program of industrial unionism must supplant the suicidal one which Gompers and his tribe use to keep themselves in clover and the rank and file of the working class chained to the chariot wheels of Capitalism.

The A. F. of L. is the legitimate offspring of Capitalism. It came into being in 1881. It was created to put the Knights of Labor out of business, which it did. "Canny Andy" Carnegie was its midwife and at that early day in the development of American Capitalism was class conscious enough to scent danger in the K. of L. which was organized in 1869 by Uriah S. Stephens, a Philadelphia tailor, who constructed its program from the "Communist Manifesto" which he got from Geo. J. Eccarius, a London tailor, and secretary of the International Association of Workingmen.

American craft unionism was born the tool of Capitalism. It has been at all times since, the tool of Capitalism. It is what the Wall Street Journal, leading organ of American Capitalism, proclaimed it to be some twenty years ago, "The strongest bulwark against Socialism in America."

At best it is but a job trust, and as such it is no part of the labor movement. It fights any attempt to organize the entire working class. It seeks to organize as many as it can find jobs for. It could not if it would, and it would not if it could do away with the cause of the workers' misery—the private ownership and operation of the means of production, distribution and exchange. It deals with effect, not with causes. It is eternally plucking some small pimple from the face of Capitalism, but never looks for the cause of the pimple or seeks to cure it. Its tactics have dug the brains out of the American workers and made them reactionary. It has forced them to walk through a slaughter house into a grave yard.

After forty years it has gathered some 2,000,000 members and has succeeded in organizing them against themselves and the working class of the world.

For these reasons it must go. It is a positive stumbling block to working class progress and its career must close by the organizing of the American proletariat for the overthrow of the wage system in one great union formed on industrial rather than on craft lines.

Otherwise Socialism, which is another way of saying the Republic of Labor, is an empty dream, a phantom to be chased by fools.

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