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EDITORIAL

## THE BLIND AND THE SEEING SAMSON.

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**T**HE Morse Shipbuilding Company has gone out of business. Pulverized between the upper mill-stone of larger and almost trustified concerns and the lower mill-stone of the Trades Union, the company failed. Above the din of the crash, two cries are heard—one of anguish, that of the small fry interested in the company; and one of joy, that of the labor leaders who lent a hand in the tearing down. It is on occasions as this that the difference leaps to sight between the blind and the seeing Samson, between the old and new trades unionism.

The capitalist must make sales. He does not produce for the love of the article he deals in. He produces to sell. And why does he sell? What is the impelling force that drives him? As he does not produce for the love of the article he deals in, neither does he sell for the fun, or the excitement of the transaction. He sells to make profits. He seeks, is bound to seek, to recover in cash the cash he put out, plus some more cash—his profits. This fact reads the death sentence of the small producer. Two forces there are which carry out the sentence.

One force is the larger capitalist. The larger the capital in operation, all the more concentrated is its effectiveness. The volume of wealth it produces is larger, and the cost of production is smaller through the reduction of waste. One yard of cloth, produced with the Northrop loom, costs one-thousandth part the time consumed by one yard of cloth produced by the hand-loom, while the waste in the former is slighter far than in the latter. The two separate yards of cloth are thrown upon the market with identical purposes—the capture of profits—the recovery of the cash put out, plus some more cash. In the duel that ensues between the two separate yards of cloth, the first, the Northrop loom product, obviously has the decided advantage. As the cash expended upon it was so much less, its price can be lowered to the point—aye, even below the point—of the cash expended on the other

yard of cloth, and yet leave a margin for profit. Thus the second yard is driven back. Its margin of profit being reduced and even cut off, what is there for it to do?

Thus driven back by the force of the more powerful capitalist, the small capitalist seeks to recoup himself from the only quarter that seems open to him—his employees. By reducing their wages he would lower his cost of production. The lower his cost of production all the more equal are the terms of his conflict with the bigger fellow. But in this retreat from the force of the upper capitalist, the smaller fellow bumps against another force—the human aspirations of the working class after physical well-being, concentrated in the Trades Union. The wages of the workingman are at best poor; moreover, however small a fellow the small capitalist be, yet is he a capitalist. His capital has contributed to lower the scale of wages by labor-displacing contrivances. To lower these low wages still lower meets objection; individual objections could be overcome; when these, however, are made collective they have a force that can offer some resistance. The Trades Union gathers into a cable the otherwise weak threads of the individual objection to a lower standard of living. The small capitalist runs up against this force. Under favorable conditions, the force is strong enough to offer successful resistance. Unable, on the one hand, to lower his cost of production by lowering wages; unable on the other hand, because of his small capital, to otherwise reduce his cost of production and compete with the larger capitalist; caught, as it were, both ways, the small capitalist goes to ruin.

Who wins? The only one in condition to draw immediate advantage is the large capitalist. The field is swept clean of the small concerns.

Does Labor, then, lose? Whether it is a total loser or not depends upon the nature of the organization that served as the lower mill-stone in the grinding down process just described. Is it an Old Style Union? Then the loss is total: the upper capitalist will have become more powerful to oppress, while labor will not have acquired greater knowledge to overcome the oppressor. Does, however, the organization know that the trend of civilization is to wipe out small production and substitute mammoth production in its place? Does it realize that such a substitution means the oppression of the people by the small handful of then {the?} capitalists, unless that class and its system be abolished, and the whole people become the owners in common of the machinery of production and produce co-operatively for

use and not for sale? Does it know that that great revolution is the mission of its class, and does it drill its members to perform that great historic task? In short, is the organization that lent a hand in the tearing down of the small concern an organization built upon the principle of New Trade Unionism? Then the loss is far from total. There may be jobs lost, there may be temporary hardships, but all these would be added spurs to push the movement forward to the critical point of the emancipation of the working class.

The old style of unionism, and of such is the union that just helped to tear down the Morse Shipbuilding Company, acts merely as an ally of large capitalism: it is a Blind Samson.

The new style of unionism clears the path for the Social Revolution: it is a Seeing Samson.

The former pulls down the pillars of the heathen temple of small capitalism, and is crushed thereunder along with its foe; the latter pulls down the pillars, but has sense to step aside and let the wreck overwhelm its foes only.

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