

EDITORIAL

ONE NARROW ESCAPE— GOOD LUCK FOR THE NEXT!

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE Labor Movement has had a narrow escape. Over the head of Chief Justice Sheppard of the Court of Appeals of the District of Columbia, who correctly held that an injunction restraining a paper from mailing a publication was in violation of the Constitution forbidding any law abridging the freedom of the press, and that, if a paper inflicts injury, the remedy lies in a suit for damages,—over the head of these sound but dangerously untimely views, the Court fortunately upheld with slight modifications the injunction issued by Judge Gould, and upon which Judge Wright based his sentence of Gompers and associates for contempt of court.

The action of the District Court of Appeals was as the times require. A reversal of Judge Gould's writ would have been harmful to the healthy growth of the Labor Movement of the land.

All the good that the Labor Movement could derive from the wrongful acts of Judges Gould and Wright have been derived. The last drop of good was squeezed out of them. They served to demonstrate the class nature of capitalist Government—one measure for the capitalist, another measure for the workingman—law for the former, arbitrariness for the latter. This was a valuable lesson without which the Labor Movement can not make real progress. It was a lesson read line upon line, and enforced with logical strictness. Had Chief Justice Sheppard's views unfortunately prevailed, sound though they are in the abstract, that lesson would have been lost. The escape was narrow; but it was made. That's good. That was one narrow escape. There are other danger points ahead.

The danger points ahead lie in the procedures that are to test Judge Wright's sentence. These are stages of danger. May they likewise be escaped, and the

sentence stand and be enforced.

The lesson so far taught by the—thanks to a long-headed Providence!—so far triumphant Van Cleave injunction proceedings is, so far, one-legged, or, rather, one-and-a-half legged. The full leg was furnished by Judge Gould's writ together with the decision sustaining the same just rendered by the District Court of Appeals. The half leg was furnished by Judge Wright's sentence. The rest of the leg—it is to be hoped Providence will not now forsake the Labor Movement!—will be furnished by the decisions sustaining the sentence upon appeal. Then will the lesson stand on two solid legs.

What capitalist Government is—that the Labor Movement has now learned. What now remains for it to learn, so it may stand, and walk—and run, is that it must become ORDERLY, and that, to become orderly, it must abandon the disorder-breeding theories of pure and simple Unionism.

Given the capitalist social order, Labor is a merchandise—live stock. The economic law dictated by the capitalist social order is that the price of merchandise—live stock included—depends upon its supply in the market. The price of the live stock merchandise Labor, that is, wages, can not emancipate itself from this law, under Capitalism. To support capitalism, and yet strive after a wage rate that is a denial of capitalist economic law, is irrational. As a consequence, to uphold a social order that decrees the status of merchandise to Labor, and yet expect human treatment for the merchandise, is to cap the climax of irrationality. Gompers and his fellow sentencees represent this double dyed insanity, and promote it. Those who do should take the consequences—the kicks when the master wills it, the crumbs when he so may please.

Gompers, Mitchell, Morrison have barked back at the master whom they worship, sacrosanct Capitalism. For such insolence, not to say profanity, they deserve, under the social order they uphold, to go to jail. Only then will they have fulfilled their mission in the scheme of the Movement. When the turn-key turns the key upon them, then will the lesson be complete to the Labor Movement.

Order, not disorder, does Progress demand. Gompersism spells disorder. Not until the sublime aspirations, of which Gompersism is a caricature, take to heart the double lesson, and organize on the political as well as on the industrial field to

overthrow the capitalist social order,—not until then will the Movement enlist the Genius of the Age to its standard, because not until then will it represent ORDER.

May that blindness with which Providence is proverbially credited with smiting those whose downfall It has decreed not fail the American Labor Movement at this pinch. May the danger points ahead be escaped—however narrowly—as the danger point just behind was escaped, and Judge Wright’s sentence be sustained.

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

Uploaded July 2010

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