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EDITORIAL

GOMPERS IN CHARGE.

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CHICAGO dispatches announce that the employees of the Chicago City Railway Company, who struck for living conditions, started a riot by throwing volleys of stones upon the five trains that were sent out by the company; and the dispatches proceed to say that the police fired upon the rioters, wounding several, and probably killing one. Obviously, Gompers is in charge. In charge of whom? Of the rioters? Of the police? Of both. He is in charge of the tragedy-show, just now enacting on the Chicago stage, with Labor and Capital as the star tragedians.

The Chicago City Railway Company's employees are badly paid and inhumanly worked. These two statements can be condensed in one—they are given a pittance of the wealth they produce. Small wonder such men are dissatisfied. But dissatisfaction alone, while being a useful, is not a sufficient force. To be effective, dissatisfaction must be intelligent: to be intelligent it must be posted. If, to the smart of privation mid toil, the employees of the Company coupled the knowledge of their status in the present social order; if they realized that under this social order they are mere merchandise,—like horses and cows; if they understood that being merchandise their wages mean their price in the labor-market—just as the price of horses and cows in the horse-market and the cattle-market ; if they perceived that this their price is controlled, like the price of horses and cows in their respective markets, by the supply of labor in the labor-market; if they further understood that under this social order, which condemns them to the level of merchandise, their price is bound to decline for the same reason that other prices decline;—if, in short, the employees of the Company were posted on their class conditions, then their discontent would take them with eyes open to the spot where the roads fork—one road leading to submission, the other to revolt; the first road leading them open-

eyedly to cooliedom as the only thing they may think themselves fit for, the other road leading them to emancipation, to the determination to free themselves from the condition of merchandise. Nor would they then be long in discovering that the vehicle on that road is the Socialist Labor Party ballot, by which to conquer the public powers, overthrow the capitalist system of bondage and raise the Socialist Republic, where he who works shall eat, and he who can and won't shall to be allowed to starve to his heart's content.

That is what would happen if these employees were in the charge of KNOWLEDGE. But they are not. They are in the charge of GOMPERS. He tells them to be dissatisfied and to ask for more, and at the same time he tells them that their interests are the same as the interests of the capitalist, and that the two can and should harmonize. No doubt they can, but only in the way that the interests of the cow and the horse can be harmonized with their owners,—by submission, and a readiness to be turned into Bologna sausages when worn out and no longer wanted. It goes without saying that men under such charge cannot give their discontent any but the expression that a discontent horse or cow would give to theirs. The conduct of the Chicago City Railway Company employees proves that Gompers is in full charge.

On the other hand, in whose charge are the shooting Police? They are weapons of the capitalist class, that is, of the class that Gompers maintains the working class should be in harmony with. Seeing that where there is a capitalist class there can only be a cow and horse class of workingmen, it follows that, when the workingman refuses to “harmonize” with his master, he is not entitled to a treatment other than that bestowed upon the “un-harmonizing,” discontented cow or horse—no more and no less than the treatment the employees of the Chicago City Railway Company are now receiving: beaten into submission. The conduct of the Police in this Chicago affair proves that Gompers is in charge of them too.

Wherever, in this broad land, there is a labor disturbance, one of these manifestations of blind dissatisfaction of Labor, accompanied with its inevitable accompaniment of capitalist brutality, there Gompers is in full charge: Gompersism is the inspiring genius. And these disturbances, riots and tragedies will continue until Socialism shall have sent Gompers, together with his “ism,” running to his

hole like a poisoned rat.

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