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EDITORIAL

## PRELIMINARY FUNERAL ORATIONS.

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**T**HE report of the proceedings of the late A.F. of L. convention, on what may be called the “Case of the Brewers,” is almost thrilling enough for yellow covers.

As is known, the “Case of the Brewers” has been pending and hanging fire for over four years, and been the cause of much friction and commotion in the A.F. of L., and of many a resolution in its conventions. What is that “Case” all about?

The events in the Labor Movement will remain an incomprehensible jumble to any who imagines these events to be “peculiar.” They are not. There is no Union, however reactionary it may be, but, will ye nill ye, acts responsible to certain immanent laws. Nor are these laws peculiar even to the Labor Movement itself. Being, however unaware any portion of the Labor Movement may be of the fact, essentially a manifestation of social development, the Labor Movement of to-day is to a large extent a repetition of Movements that have preceded it, and which, owing to the lower stages of social development in which they figured, assumed exclusively political aspects. He who would understand the American Labor Movement will first have to be clear upon its trend—the revolutionizing of capitalist society; accordingly, the construction of a new social order. This point once grasped, the seemingly chaotic events of to-day recall to mind events of yesterday. No little light is shed by the latter upon the former.

When the thirteen colonies, just emerged from feudal dependence upon the Crown of England, weak in numbers, weaker in resources, weaker still in experience, were going through the travail of building up a capitalist Nation, Aaron Burr rebellions, Hartford conventions and the like were frequent occurrences. Personal vanities, rooted in personal interests, and personal interests fired by personal vanities, frequently strained for “independence.” The bee of independent

Presidents of independent little Republics, together with a swarm of other and similar bees, not all of show but often of quite material aims, buzzed in the heads of schemers. In the measure that the Nation gained strength in numbers, in resources and in experience the schemers subsided, and the Nation leaped forward into full stature. That which the then forming capitalist Nation was experiencing a hundred years ago, the now forming Republic of Labor is getting foretastes of. Industrial Unions, States in themselves, or embryo States, frequently experience to-day serious convulsions of rebellion; and these rebellions are captained by schemers, the Aaron Burrs of branch crafts in whose bonnets buzz the bees of independent presidencies and secretaryships, together with their emoluments. This is the "Case of the Brewers." The United Brewery Workers' Union, in the nature of a powerful State, gathered within its confines all the crafts engaged in the production of malted liquors—not brewers only, but teamsters, engineers and firemen, etc. The Brewery Workers' organization was in the direction of Industrial Unionism. The bees of independent Statehood, so to speak, having for their object independent Presidents and Secretaries, plus emoluments, began buzzing in the bonnets of the Aaron Burrs in the teamsters' and in the engineers' and firemen's subdivisions of the United Brewery Workers. The very reason that caused the political Aaron Burrs to be snuffed out, added oil to the flame of the economic Aaron Burrs in the A.F. of L.—the capitalist Nation was cast in the Industrial, the A.F. of L. in the craft mold. And thus it happened that since the New Orleans convention, four years ago, instead of the A.F. of L. sustaining the Industrial Statehood of the United Brewery Workers, it supported the Aaron Burr insurrectionists, notwithstanding the manifest desire of the rank and file teamsters and firemen and engineers to remain loyal. The decisions of the A.F. of L. conventions ordered the Brewery Workers to recognize the secessionists, or themselves stand outlawed.

Thus stood matters when this year's convention of the A.F. of L. met. The matter of the brewers came up again, now for final decision. It was threshed out during the ninth, the tenth and the eleventh days. Two resolutions had been introduced—both hostile to the Brewery Workers' Union; the committee in charge condensed the spirit of the two resolutions into one, containing six paragraphs, the sixth of which was the crack of the whip. It instructed the Executive Committee "to

immediately revoke the charter” of the United Brewery Workers if it continued to disobey the orders of the convention to grant craft independence to its seceding members. A substitute was offered, also an amendment striking out the sixth paragraph; the matter was lengthily discussed; the substitute was defeated by a viva-voce vote; the amendment fared no better; and finally the original resolution was adopted upon roll call by 7,775 votes against 5,630, with 577 not voting. One more nail, stout and strong, was thus self-driven into the coffin of the A.F. of L.

Immediately thereupon—and surely not by accident, but contrived by that providential dispensation that sets carrion-crows hovering in the wake of armies—President, sexton, undertaker and master of funeral ceremonies Samuel Gompers introduced to the convention the Rev. J.A. Ryan, who whined a dirge, to the tune of “A Living Wage.”

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