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EDITORIAL

THE COLUMBUS EXPLOSION.

By DANIEL DE LEON

IN 1903, during the strike in Columbus, O., of the engineers and firemen, affiliated with and part of the United Brewery Workers, a corporal's guard of strangling and unorganized engineers and firemen—but numerous enough to scab upon the brewers and break their strike—were rounded up in that city by the agents of Gompers, were “organized” into a new “Union” of engineers and firemen, and thus furnished “Union labor” with which the brewery bosses could and did knock-down the engineer and firemen's branch of the United Brewery Workers then on strike.

The affair of 1903 was a preliminary skirmish in the campaign of the A.F. of L. to destroy the industrially organized brewers; to decompose that strong, because industrial, body of the United Brewery Workers into its component craft elements; and thus to render (for a consideration?) a valuable piece of service to the brewery bosses. In the language of the pure and simple political Socialist Party men, the affair was a step illustrative of the steady, triumphantly steady, “march of the A.F. of L. towards industrialism.” Though the skirmish had proved successful, in that the brewers' strike was lost, the affair created such a sensation that the schemers sought to patch up some kind of peace and compromise. This was done—as will appear presently it was pretended to be done—by the labor lieutenants of the capitalist class assembled at the Toronto Council of the A.F. of L., which met soon after the Columbus incident. At that Council it was decided that the contracts entered by the opposition Union of engineers and firemen with the brewery bosses should be declared null and void, and that new contracts were to be concluded the feature of which contracts was to be that they were all to expire on the same date on which the contracts of the brewery workers expired. The promise of making all the contracts in the breweries expire on the same day removed one of the objections of

the United Brewery Workers to the independent organization of the engineers and firemen's craft of the industry. The rival organization of firemen and engineers was sustained, and the engineers and firemen, formerly affiliated with the Brewery Union and against whom the new body had scabbed, submitted to leaving their parent body and joining the new one.

Obedient to the orders of the Toronto Council a new set of contracts all to expire on the same date, were entered into in May, 1903, with the brewery employers of Columbus by all the crafts in the brewery industry—brewers, bottlers, beer-drivers, and stationary engineers and firemen. The date for the expiration of the contracts was April 1, 1906. Did we say a new set of contracts, all to expire on the same date, were entered into? The statement is subject to modification. A new set of contracts, all to expire on the same date was believed to have been entered into. When April 1, 1906, came around the little Joker was discovered. The duplicates of all contracts, held by the Unions, did expire, on the same day, April 1, 1906; not so, however, the duplicates of all the contracts held by the bosses. There was one exception. The exception was the duplicate of the contract of the stationary engineers and firemen. The duplicate of that contract, held by the employers, expired a full year later, April 1, 1907, while the duplicate of the same contract, held by the Union of the stationary engineers and firemen itself agreed with the date of all the others, duplicates and originals. A singular "error" on the part of J.D. Pierce, the dignitary, who, in the capacity of National Organizer of the A.F. of L., signed and witnessed the contract entered into between the engineers and firemen, on the one side, and the brewery bosses on the other.

Was this discrepancy an accident? If it was, Mr. Pierce would have so pronounced it, and the bosses would have so construed it. But no! From Gompers's pet Pierce down, the leading officers of the new stationary engineers and firemen's Union lined up with the obviously forged 1907 contract; lined up with the boss; lined up with the plot to promote craft Unionism in the interest of the capitalist class! The result was to be expected—an explosion. Forty-two members of the duped firemen's Union hurled the forgery into the faces of their national officers, and walked out of a Union whose real purposes they then discovered, and rejoined their former Union, Local No. 80 of their craft in the United Brewery Workers; the

Columbus Trade and Labor Assembly pronounced itself in no uncertain tone in favor of the brewers, seated and kept Local No. 80 as constituent members, and now defies the A.F. of L. to revoke its charter.

“Contracts” are begotten of fraud; fraud and corruption attend their every step; there is no honorable contract possible between the wage slave and the capitalist slave-holders. They are the bands that fetter the motions of the Giant Labor. No wonder Belmont’s vice-President Gompers tours the country to the refrain of “the sanctity of contracts drawn up under the auspices of the A.F. of L.”

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