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EDITORIAL

THE UNION LABEL AND ITS BOOMERS.

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SURELY someone on the pure and simple union label booming Socialist party *Call* must have nodded, otherwise that correspondence headed, "Tobin Whips Shoe Workers Into Line," would not have crept into its issue of August 24th. The article, which is dated Brockton, Mass., relates a tale of the usual Tobin tactics in dealing with members whose notions of a union's functions are that it should be a shield to labor instead of, as they are finding it out to be, a shackle.

Passing over the immediate cause of the dispute, the revocation of the charter of the Stitchers' Union, Tobin's finely drawn out decision as to the legality of a committee, etc., etc., we come to this summing up of the situation, made, the *Call* declares, by one of the stitchers:

"The existing situation is intolerable and can not last. The opinion of the mass of union people in Brockton is that they are merely paying dues to insure themselves reductions in wages. If the union stamp was to mean anything to us it was to protect us against downward tendencies in wages and other conditions, but now it is merely a method by which the manufacturers can promote those tendencies. In the present case the general executive board has defended and supported Alan, who, as our representative before the State board of arbitration, indorsed a 25 per cent. reduction in our wages, making it possible for the State board to order the reduction, and for the manufacturer to collect thousands of dollars paid in wages since last March. The present critical period may be bridged over now, but it only means a more bitter struggle and fiercer revolt later on, and the Federation of Labor will have to take action soon or the union stamp and label will be forever discredited in the labor movement."

Here we have it plump and plain: the vaunted union label is used as a shackle to hold the rebellious worker chained to the interests of the boss.

The label and "sacred" agreement go together; they are the labor fakir's stock in

trade, which he, like any other commercial drummer, markets. What shoe manufacturer, we wonder, has not heard the labor fakir's goods descanted upon something after this fashion: "Make a contract with us and we will assure you of immunity from all labor troubles. We will name a wage rate agreeable to you, and furnish you the men. We can control the men in our organization. They will without question abide by any contract that we may make." Then, as a further inducement, is presented the "merits" of the union label—as a business bringer to the boss.

The whole theory that the label could benefit the workers is false. Under the capitalist system, union, the same as non-union labor, is bound to get its necessities as cheaply as possible, forced thereto by capitalism under which their wages must steadily decline. That hard fact scuttles the union theory that the label can hold wages up.

The ignorance of these facts leads to false reasoning with regard to the potency of the label as a working class weapon. In the hands of the labor fakir the label becomes a thing turned against the workers, is the mark of their unionized bondage to the boss. The only one whom the union label benefits is the boss. In addition to the benefit he derives, through the label smothering rebellion in the shop, he also gets the business of the well-to-do sentimentalists who organize label leagues.

As to the benefit of the union label to the workers, it is clearly stated by the stitcher that the *Call* article quotes: "If the union stamp was to mean anything to us it was to protect us against downward tendencies in wages and other conditions, but now it is merely a method by which the manufacturers can promote those tendencies."

The *Call* stitcher's indictment of the labor enslaving uses to which the union label is put is also an indictment of the label booming Socialist party. Which is why we say, and the reason is plain, that somebody nodded, when the "Tobin Whips Shoe Workers Into Line" article got into the *Call*.

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