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EDITORIAL

CRAFT UNIONISM A MILK-TOOTH.

By DANIEL DE LEON

AT the laying of some cornerstone in Washington, someone in the surging crowd who noticed how deftly President Taft handled the trowel, as is reported, or who, more likely, perceived clumsiness in the President's unaccustomed work, called out: "Are you a Union man?"

The moment was crucial. The historian of the future will heark back to the answer, and the reception the answer received, as evidence of the standing that Unionism—held in the estimation of former society, as late as the first decade of the Twentieth Century.

The answer, given by the President as he straightened up and looked around with a laugh, was:

"Yes, I'm a member of the ____, the ____." Somehow he could not seem to recall to just what Union he did belong. The crowd was immensely amused at his hesitancy. At length he got it, and said:

"I'm a member of the Steam Shovelers' Union."

At that there was a burst of laughter, the report closes with saying.

When fat, dull-witted Queen Victoria was asked on a certain occasion what the name was of the German regiment, of which she had received the badge of "Colonel," she also looked around with a laugh, also did not seem to be able to recall of just what regiment she was made a member, also started with: "Of the ____, the ____," and also finally remembered it was the "Imperial Hussars," whereat "people laughed."

Unionism will be, must be, the cornerstone of the Socialist, or Industrial Republic—the social system that social evolution unmistakably designates as the one that is to dethrone and supplant the existing or Capitalist system of Society. And yet, as late as the year of grace 1909, the mentioning of the word, or the thing,

only serves as the occasion for a witticism on the part of the Chief Magistrate of Capitalist Society, and for the “immense amusement,” followed by a “burst of laughter” on the part of the large and mixed crowd that gathered around him! Moreover the incident occurred in the very city where the Gompers-Mitchellic A.F. of L. has its “stately headquarters”!

The strong tooth, that is to stead the man in virile life, does not appear before the weak, temporary tooth of milk age has grown hollow and rootless. The hollowness and rootlessness of the milk-tooth is no argument against Teeth: it is rather a symptom of the dueness of the Tooth, proper. Unionism a la Gompers-Mitchell is, at best, the milk tooth of an infant Labor or Socialist Movement. How near at hand the strong tooth of the revolutionary, or Industrial or Socialist Movement is, may be gathered from the rootlessness and hollowness of the present milk-teeth. How rootless and hollow these are the fun poked at them by President Taft and relished by a big crowd gives an idea of.

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

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