

EDITORIAL

BUTCHER WORKERS AND THE “TIMES.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen of North America should formally adopt the *New York Times* as its official organ. Both the out-and-out, acknowledged organ of capitalism and the supposed organization of labor are agreed on one thing, a thing of such pivotal importance that the minor differences between the two should be laid aside.

If there is any cogency in the English language, a “labor organization” means an organization *of labor*, of workingmen. It does not mean an organization of arctic explorers, bank presidents, or faro dealers; it means an organization of wage earners. The basic idea of organization or union is protection. The only persons whom an organization of wage earners, in their capacity of wage earners, can desire or need protection from, are the wage payers, or employers. The wage earners need this protection from the wage payers because (1) the wage earners produce a certain amount of wealth; (2) the wage payers, who do not share in this production, yet, by virtue of their ownership of the tools which the wage earners need to produce with, appropriate the wealth produced by the wage earners; (3) the wage payers, in order to keep the wage earners alive and in condition to produce, pay them “wages” out of the wealth they themselves produced, and retain possession of the rest; hence (4) the economic interests of the wage payers drive them to give to the wage earners an ever smaller share of the wealth they produce, and conversely, the physical and intellectual needs and aspirations of the wage earners compel them to demand an ever larger share of the wealth which is due to their own toil. Thus arises the inevitable struggle between the two classes; thus arises the necessity for labor unions.

To all of this, however, the Amalgamated Meat Cutters are innocently oblivious. Like the Dublin Bakers’ Association, which is organized “for the benefit of

our employer, the good of our neighbor, the honor of our most gracious Sovereign, and the glory of God," the Meat Cutters seem to be run for everything and anything except to further the economic interests of its bona fide members, the butcher workmen. Its chief aim in life seems to be to boom the master butchers' business. Before us lies a circular letter issued by Local 77 of that body, of Troy, N.Y., thrillingly depicting the advantages to the boss of the union card in his window. It begs him to secure this additional advertisement to his trade either by telling at least one employe "whether or not he should join the union," or if he "is conducting his own market and not employing a man eligible to membership," by "becoming an active member himself." When the boss has thus, either by compelling his workman to join the union, or by joining it himself, become the proprietor of a "Union Market," all workingmen affiliated with the Central Federation of Troy are supposed to patronize him, under pain of a \$2 fine.

Here is the spectacle of an organization, supposed to be founded in the interests of labor, allowing, nay, begging the exploiter of labor into its ranks. It thus denies the very reason for its own existence, and gives assent to the statement of the New York *Times*, viz., "The mistaken notion that capital and labor are arrayed against each other is the parent of innumerable fallacies." The Butcher Workers deny by action what the *Times* denies by word—the class struggle. They should not hesitate to make the *Times* their organ.

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

Uploaded December 2009

slpns@slp.org