

THE TWENTIES IN POLITICAL CARTOONS

Fourteen political cartoons examining the “labor vs. capital” divide that re-ignited in America after World War One are presented in this collection. They appeared in labor, African American, and general circulation newspapers from 1919, the first year of massive nationwide strikes and of the anxiety-driven Red Scare, to 1926, as labor unrest continued to erupt in violence. Be sure to note the objects or persons labeled “capital” and “labor” in the cartoons.

To analyze a political cartoon, consider its:

- ❑ **CONTENT.** First, basically describe what is drawn in the cartoon (without referring to the labels). What is depicted? What is happening?
- ❑ **CONTEXT.** Consider the timing. What is happening in national events at the time of the cartoon? Check the date: what occurred in the days and weeks before the cartoon appeared?
- ❑ **LABELS.** Read each label; look for labels that are not apparent at first, and for other written content in the cartoon.
- ❑ **SYMBOLS.** Name the symbols in the cartoons. What do they mean? How do they convey the cartoon’s meaning?
- ❑ **TITLE.** Study the title. Is it a statement, question, exclamation? Does it employ a well-known phrase, e.g., slang, song lyric, movie title, radio show, political or product slogan? How does it encapsulate and enhance the cartoonist’s point?
- ❑ **TONE.** Identify the tone of the cartoon. Is it satirical, comic, tragic, ironic, condemning, quizzical, imploring? What adjective describes the feeling of the cartoon? How do the visual elements in the drawing align with its tone?
- ❑ **POINT.** Put it all together. What is the cartoonist’s point?

QUESTIONS

- ❑ What general viewpoint is prevalent in the big-city general circulation newspapers?
- ❑ What additional perspective appears in the labor and African American newspapers?

LABOR & CAPITAL



“There Must Be Cutting from Both Sides”
Brooklyn Eagle, ca. May/June 1921



“A Real American Federation of Labor”
The Pittsburgh Courier, Sept. 1, 1923



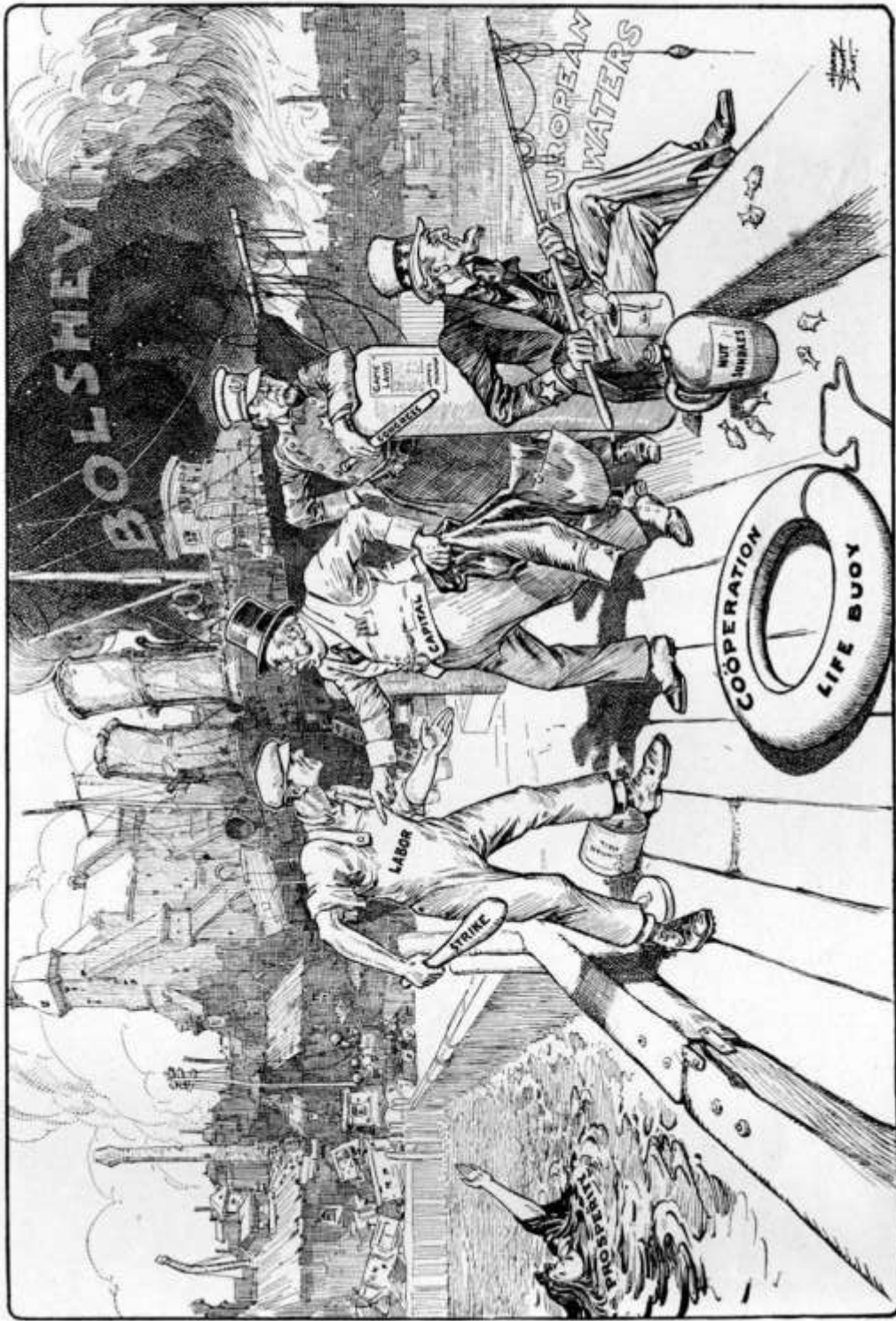
Untitled

Seattle Union Record, February 6, 1919

Labor newspaper. Cartoonist: I. Swenson

The major labor newspaper in Seattle, Washington, published this cartoon on the first day of a five-day general strike, the first in U.S. history, in which thousands of Seattle workers stopped working to show solidarity with striking shipyard workers.

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“And in the Meantime the Lady Drowns”

Life, May 8, 1919

Cartoonist: Harry Grant Dart

Prosperity. Labor. Capital. Strike. Dinner Pail. Cooperation Life Buoy. Bolshevism. Congress. Game Laws. European Waters. Nut Sundae (bootleg whiskey).

Search in process for copyright holder of *Life* (estate of Henry T. Rockwell) or illustrations of Harry Grant Dart. Digital image from original publication.



**"Why Can't People Think of That
Before Breaking Up All the Furniture"**

Des Moines Register [Iowa], June 7, 1919

Cartoonist: Jay N. "Ding" Darling

Labor. Capital. Prosperity: Their Only Child. Lockouts. Strikes. U.S. Capital. U.S. Labor. Our Neighbors.

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**"There Are Moments When Married Life Seems Quite Endurable
Even to a Man Who Thinks He's Henpecked"**

Des Moines Register, June 14, 1919

Cartoonist: Jay N. "Ding" Darling

U.S. Labor. Capital. Reds (Communists, Soviet-inspired radicals).

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“And We Also Have Class Unconsciousness”

Brooklyn Eagle, ca. Oct./Nov. 1919
as reprinted in the *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 4, 1919

Cartoonist: Nelson Harding

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"The Tariff and Immigration Questions"

Chicago Tribune, March 1, 1921

Cartoonist: Carey Orr

Capital. Labor. Cheap Foreign Labor. Cheap Foreign Goods. U.S. Household. "God Bless Our Home."

Reproduced by permission of the *Chicago Tribune*. Digital image courtesy of ProQuest Historical Newspapers.



“There Must Be Cutting from Both Sides”

Brooklyn Eagle, ca. May/June 1921
as reprinted in the *Los Angeles Times*, June 5, 1921
Cartoonist: Nelson Harding

Labor. Capital. Wage Cut. Price Cut. High Costs.

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“Capital’s One Big Fear!”

Industrial Pioneer, September 1921

Labor newspaper (IWW).

Capital. One Big Union.

The *Industrial Pioneer* was a monthly publication of the International Workers of the World, the socialist union formed in Chicago in 1905 that adopted the Marxist goal of destroying capitalism and the wage system. It rejected the American Federation of Labor for working within the capitalist system and promoted its alternative of “one big union” of all workers, skilled and unskilled, under the IWW banner.

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Advertisement for the
National Association for the Promotion
of Labor Unionism among Negroes

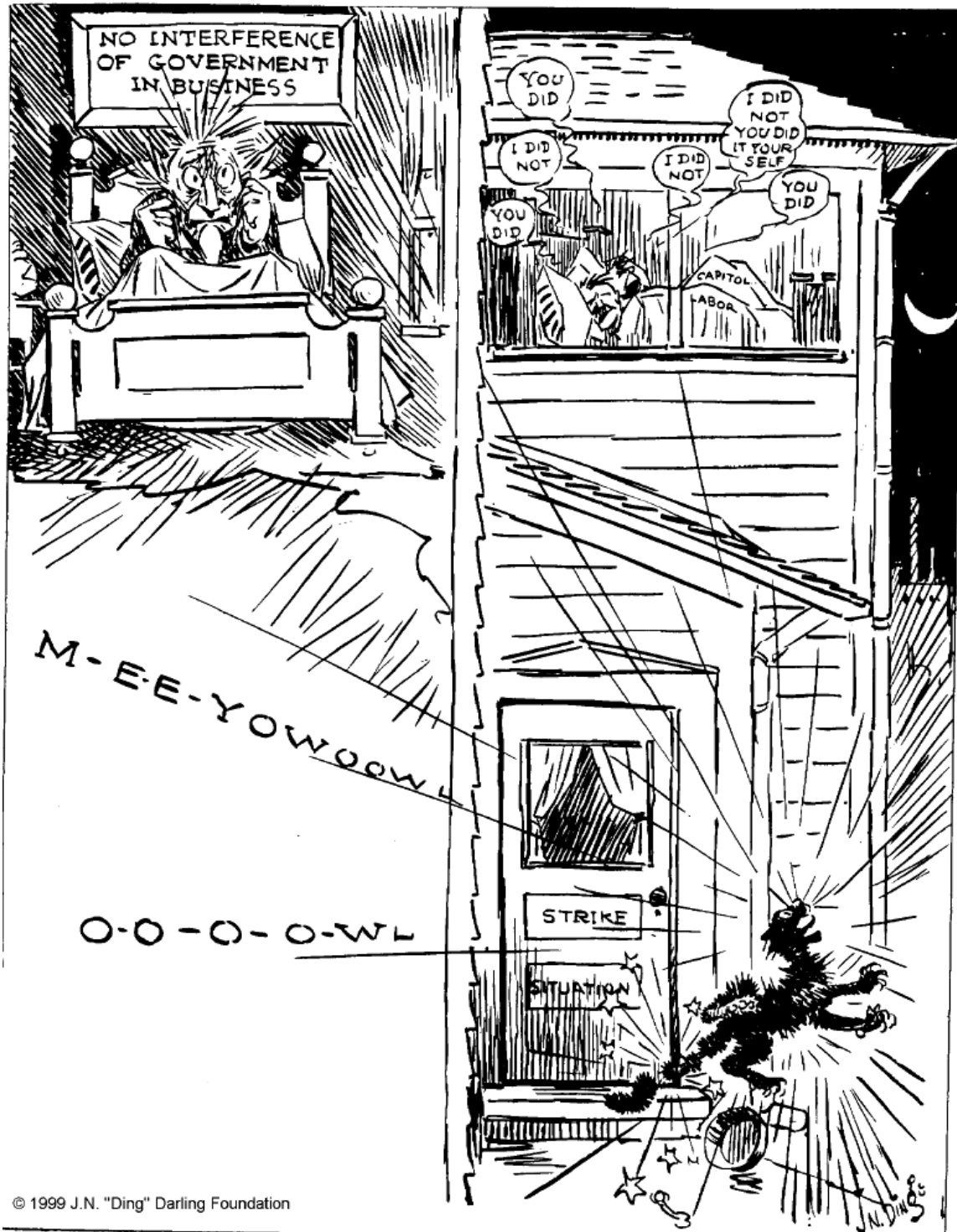
The Messenger, February 1922

Negro Labor. White Labor. Capital Profits. Agitator Dog.

The Messenger was an African American socialist magazine founded in 1917 in New York City by A. Philip Randolph and Owen Chandler.

"Agitator Dog": Socialist and Communist [Bolshevik] labor activists were labeled "agitators" by opponents who charged them with aggravating labor unrest to pursue their goal of a total labor takeover of industrial property. Here the cartoonist uses the term to "agitate" white and African American workers to transcend racial competition and work together in labor unions to gain higher wages.

Courtesy of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.



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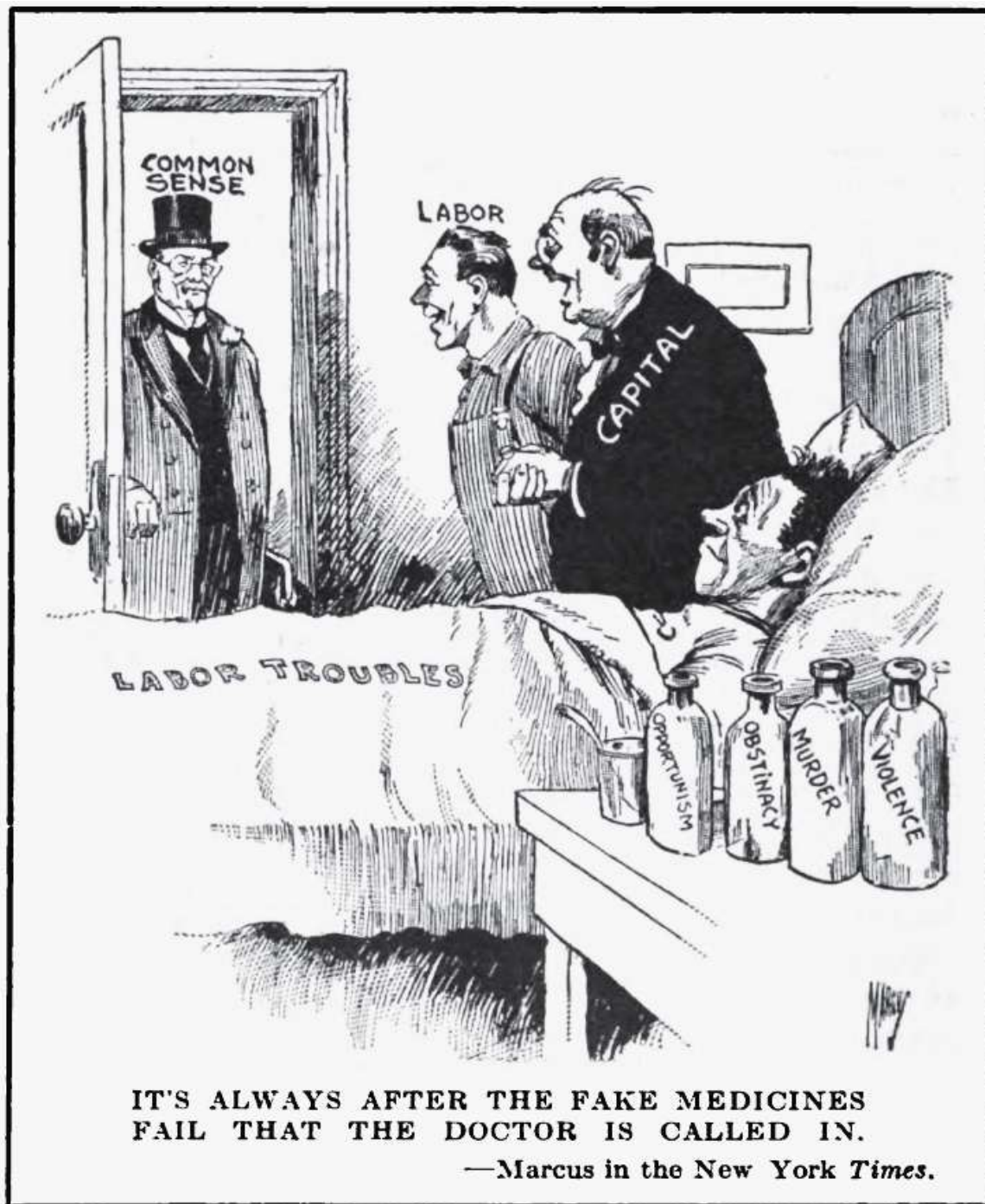
"Wonder How Much Longer He Can Stand It"

Des Moines Register [Iowa], May 3, 1922

Cartoonist: Jay N. "Ding" Darling

Labor. Capital. Strike Situation. No Interference of Government in Business.

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The New York Times, ca. 1922
reprinted in the *Literary Digest*, August 26, 1922

Cartoonist: Edwin Marcus

Labor. Capital. Labor Troubles. Common Sense. Opportunism. Obstinacy. Murder. Violence.

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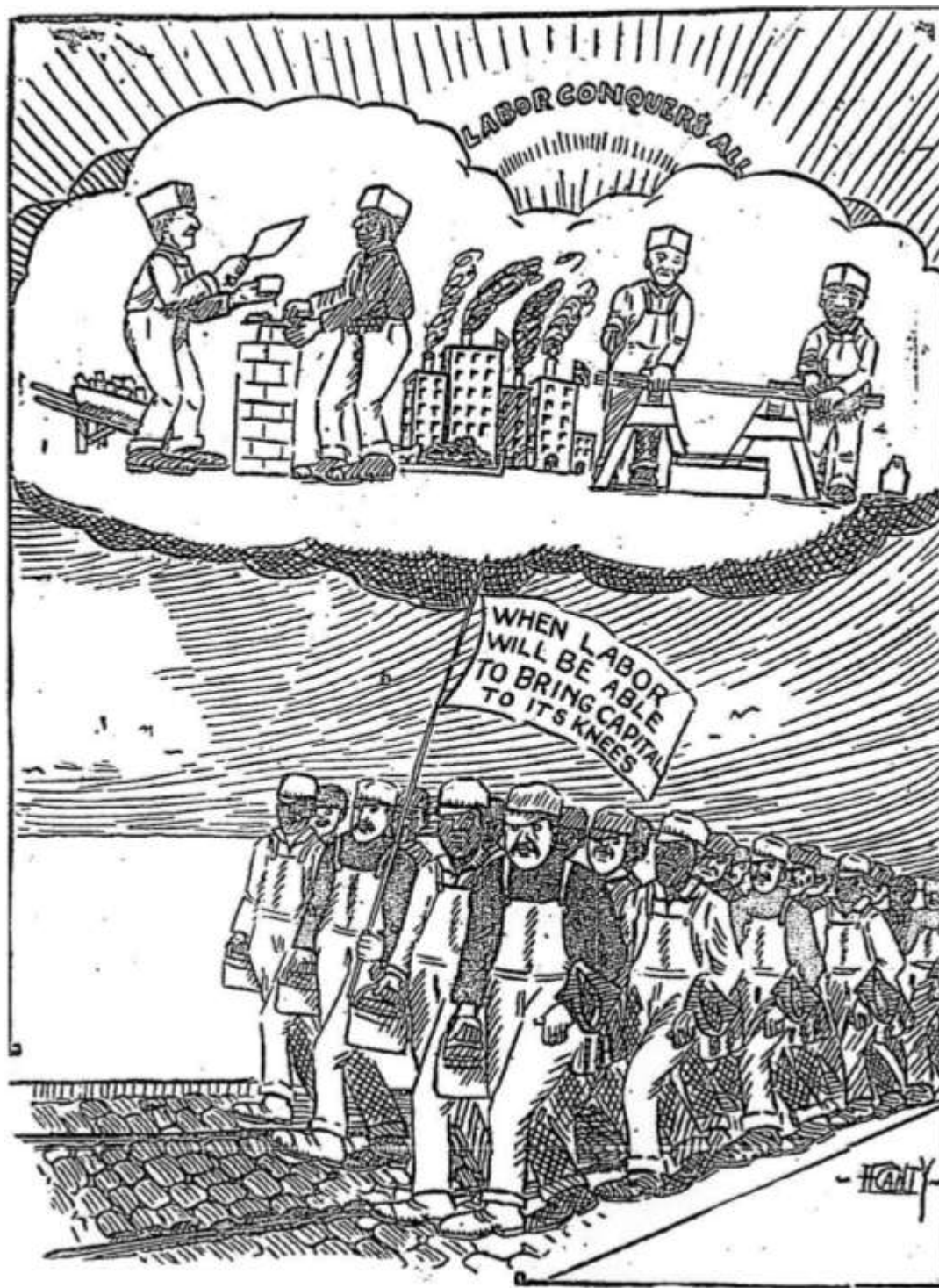


"We must not make a scarecrow of the law,
 "Setting it up to fear the birds of prey,
 "And let it keep one shape, till custom make it
 "Their perch and not their terror."
 —"MEASURE FOR MEASURE"

Untitled
The New York Times, September 3, 1922
 Cartoonist: Edwin Marcus

Vultures: Lawless Labor / Lawless Capital. Headless scarecrow: Labor Legislation.
 Lines from Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure* (Act II: Sc. 1), ca. 1604.

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“A Real American Federation of Labor”

The Pittsburgh Courier, September 1, 1923

African American newspaper. Cartoonist: H. Canty.

“Labor Conquers All.” “When Labor Will Be Able to Bring Capital to Its Knees.”

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“The Devil’s ‘Home Brew’”

The Afro-American, Baltimore, May 8, 1926

African American newspaper. Cartoonist: Fred B. Watson.

Capital. Low Wages. Union Labor. Race Discrimination. Politics. Low Wages. Lawlessness.
American Race Sentiment. BANG! Cateret, N.J. outburst.

“Home Brew”: homemade illegal alcohol.

“Cateret outburst”: In April 1926 in Carteret, New Jersey, rioting white mobs attacked black residents, burned churches, and drove the terrorized black population from the town. For several years, white laborers had resented the competition from southern blacks who were hired for lower wages in the town’s fertilizer factory.

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