

# The People.

VOL. VII, NO. 37

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, DECEMBER 12, 1897

PRICE 3 CENTS

SECOND EDITORIAL

## The Same Old Story.

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**N**ews comes from England that the contemplated railroad strike has been abandoned. The reason given is that “not one-third of the men are organized, and their society has not money enough to undertake a strike”!

Such a set of facts—no funds and unorganized majority—coming from the classic ground of pure and simple trade unionism, tells a tale that should be taken to heart.

The theory of pure and simple unionism is that the condition of the workers can be improved by organizations that are simply and purely industrial or economic. According to this theory, the Labor Question is not a political question at all. Politics can go as it likes; provided the workers are organized for the economic struggle, all is done that can and need be done. This theory presupposes the possibility of so organizing the workers while the Government is left wholly in the hands of the idlers or capitalists, and no political effort is put forth looking towards the dislodgement of the capitalist class from its political power. We have often illustrated the fundamental error of a theory that denies so essential a principle as that the Labor Question is essentially a political one, and the fatal results that flow from the misconception. We shall not now return to that phase of the question. We shall here take up the pure and simple position from another side.

The proof of the pudding lies in the eating. The pure and simple theory has been in practice fully two generations, and in England it has had full swing. If it were possible to organize the trades upon pure and simple lines the thing would surely have been done in England. Was it? No; the failure there is almost as signal as here: Only a small minority is organized, and the funds collected are too trifling to justify entrance into a conflict with the well-filled pockets of the foe. The condition of the society of railroad workers in England is, therefore, a stubborn fact, which denies pure and simpledom.

Nor can it be otherwise. Planted on a theory of the social system that is wholly

wrong, every step taken by the pure and simple organization must tend towards exemplifying its impotence. It cannot gather the forces of labor within its camp because it rears its camp within bounds that are too narrow. A pint measure can never contain a gallon. The gallon measure of the Labor Question will never go into the pint measure of the pure and simple trade union. Only the broad bottomed measure of New Trade Unionism can embrace the Labor Question.

To organize the trades successfully, the capitalist or bourgeois idea of organization for the purpose of cornering the merchandise labor-power must be abandoned. The worker must be enlisted as a soldier conscious of the purpose of his enlistment—not the upholding of the existing system by imitating the exploiters, but the overthrow of the existing system. Only then can they be all gathered together, because only then is the bond of solidarity between all quickened into life.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.  
Uploaded November 2003