

# The People.

VOL. VII, NO. 45

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 1898

PRICE 3 CENTS

EDITORIAL

## Pure and Simpledom on Exhibition in England.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**T**he phenomena that have accompanied the late engineers' strike in England can not fail to deal a heavy blow to that bizarrest of superstitions afloat which consists in the theory that, because England is the country that first developed conspicuously on capitalist lines, therefore the steps taken there by the workingmen in their struggle with the capitalist class must of necessity be correct and worthy of imitation everywhere else.

Two among the several phenomena accompanying the strike will amply illustrate the point.

In the first place, the United Pattern Makers' Association, a union kindred in trade to and affiliated with the engineers, not only hastened to profit by the lock-out of its fellow proletarians, the engineers; not only, through its General Secretary, Mr. Mosses, congratulated themselves upon the improvement in their trade made at the expense of the engineers; but actually, in pursuit of their own private trade interests, helped defeat the engineers by filling up shops in which the engineers were on strike. Here is what this Mr. Mosses himself says in the report in which he congratulates his union on the reduction in the number of its unemployed members:

“The improvement in trade which is indicated by this change in the condition of our vacant books is chiefly noticeable in the Leeds, Clyde and Mersey districts, and is probably due TO THE GRADUALLY FILLING UP OF THE SHOPS WHICH HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN THE LOCK-OUT.”

And he says this unblushingly.

In the second place, comes the spectacle presented at the recent York by-election. The Liberal party put up as its candidate Sir Christopher Furness, a member of the Federation of Engineering Employers, who, together with his associates, Col. Dyer and Siemens, locked out the engineers, was upholding the lock-out, and was conspicuous in

the bosses' efforts to down the men. In that campaign, conducted, not years and years after the engineers' fight, when it might have passed out of memory, but in the very midst of the fight, who were the most conspicuous and active stump speakers for Sir Christopher, the out-locking employer? Hold your breaths, ye who are uninformed, and, if you have wonderment, prepare to wonder now! The most conspicuous and active advocates of Sir Christopher's candidature were THE TRADES UNION OFFICIALS, THOMAS BURT AND RICHARD MCGHEE, BOTH "REPRESENTATIVES OF UNIONISM" IN PARLIAMENT!

Pure and Simple Trade Unionism had its birth in England. Not all birth is sound and healthy. The condition of the parents may beget and conceive a creature that, when given birth to, turns out to be a monstrosity. Such is the case with the British style of unionism. Begot and conceived under unhealthy conditions, often referred to in these columns, it has grown to be the monstrosity we see to-day. In its fruit the tree is recognized. "Pure and Simpledom" is not a child of the class struggle. It is a cross between Labor and Capital, bearing the hideous features of the mixture of Pan and Venus. The struggle in which it frequently finds itself involved with Capital is no ground to consider it representative of the working class: capitalists are often in one another's hair; that does not take either side out of the capitalist rank; the struggles of "Pure & Simple Unionism" with Capital are struggles that emanate from capitalist conceptions, are conducted upon capitalist lines, and have capitalist aims in view;— witness Mr. Mosses' report, the conduct of the men in his union, the attitude of Messrs. Burt and McGhee.

As the conditions that originally surrounded the Australian savage led him, thousands of years ago, into the rut of the peculiar family relations he then fell into, so the conditions that surrounded the British wage slave a few generations ago led him into the rut of "Pure & Simpledom; and, as that peculiar form of family relations, into which the Australian savage fell, throttled his development, and left him pretty near the bottom rung of development, almost as low as the most savage race now extant, so, likewise, did that peculiar form of organization, into which the British wage slave fell, throttle his development, leaving the movement of his class away in the rear of the movement of the proletariat elsewhere.

"Pure & Simpledom" is and must be treated as an appendage of Capitalism. The path to overthrow the latter lies over the prostrate body of the former, laid low by class-conscious, revolutionary New Trades Unionism.

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