

# The People.

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## Object Lessons on a Broad Stage.

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**M**aking ample allowance for the mendacity of the capitalist press, many circumstances combine to indicate that, in the matter of the British engineers' strike, the devil does not always lie. The strike may be considered lost; it is lost—hopelessly, unquestionably lost. And yet, perhaps, not absolutely.

When a battle is about to be fought the elements of strength of the contending sides are always considered. The issue of the battle, as a rule, depends upon the correct estimate of such elements. When the strike started, did the leaders of the engineers make this calculation? They confidently counted upon victory. From what premises did they draw their confidence? From the premises of their treasury; their own treasury and the much larger treasury that they justly knew would flow to them in the course of the conflict from their fellow toilers of all countries. In doing that the leaders of the engineers committed a military blunder that deserves for them summary Court-Martial proceedings.

Strength is a relative thing. What is strength in one case may be impotence in another. An army, 10,000 strong, may be an overpowering force when, pitted against it, there is a body of only 100 men; and, inversely, that same army of 10,000 men becomes a hopeless weakling when its adversary is 1,000,000 strong.—The engineers overlooked this principle. They considered only the strength of the money at their own disposal; this they announced to be something like a million dollars. Such a treasury is surely not a weak one; but its strength in a conflict, like the strength of numbers in battle, is a relative affair. A million to fight with would be overwhelming when it has only one thousand dollars against it; but it is wholly inadequate when hundreds of millions are arrayed against it. This was the case in this instance. The treasury of the capitalist class is infinitely superior to that that all the forces of labor combined can muster up for the fray. The engineers blundered in keeping their eyes on their own treasury without taking that of the foe into consideration.

But there was another military blunder committed. In battle, a body numerically

inferior to another may yet be the superior force. Its superiority would depend upon its position. A position of vantage may give the preponderance of power to a smaller over a larger force, and bring it victory. No reliable strategist overlooks that; he weighs the position of his own and that of his adversary.—The leaders of the engineers neglected that consideration. Had they kept it in mind they would have discovered that, in point of position alone, their foe commanded all the strategic points. That foe is entrenched in the Government; it has the power of legislation, of interpretation of laws and of their enforcement. Its position alone is powerful; adding to that its actual superiority in soldiers (money), and the issue could be none other than the defeat of the strikers.

What happened, the victory of the usurping class, may or may not be a complete victory for Capitalism according as the strike has or has not taught the above elemental lessons in warfare. If it has failed to teach them, then the defeat is crushing. If, however, it has opened the eyes of the engineers and all their fellow wage-slaves to the fact that the very thing that renders them slaves is the possession of the bulk of the wealth by their exploiters; that in a conflict between dollars, the exploited is “not in it”; that the Government is an invaluable aid to the class in control; that to dislodge the capitalist from that point of vantage is a strategic feat easy of accomplishment, seeing the exploited—the wage-slave class—is numerous, while the exploiting, the capitalist class is infinitely small;—if these facts have at least reached a clearer stage of perception in the minds of the proletariat, then the battle just lost is one virtually gained; instead of being a landmark of decline, it is a milestone on the path of victory and emancipation.

The control of the Government by the proletariat would give it a strategic advantage that counter balances its economic impotence. With such control, no strike could be lost—none would be needed: the usurping capitalist class would cease to exist with the then inevitable downfall of their dungeon-peep capitalist system.

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

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