

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 2, NO. 223.

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 1902.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

AND YET ANOTHER INSTANCE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE light of a certain performance, that took place on the 5th instant in this city, should not be hidden under a bushel.

The scene of the performance was the office of the Howard & Morse Manufacturing Company. The actors were, on the one side, 14 manufacturers of wire goods, presided over by one of their own number, W.S. Estey of the Estey Wire Works Company, and on the other side a committee of their employees. The committee, by letter, submitted a request for the reduction of the working day to eight hours with the same pay as now given for ten hours. The manufacturers declined. Should one not expect that there was "a hot time in town" on that occasion? Would not the above bare outlines of the performance indicate a clash between opposing class interests? Well, no! And therein lies the brilliancy of the light that should not be allowed to lie hidden under a bushel. There was absolute harmony in premises and conclusions between the two sets.

The employees stated that their request was made "in an entirely friendly spirit," and they explained that it was furthermore made in the interest of both the employer and the employe, seeing it was "in accordance with the laws of progress," which concerned all alike. The employers thereupon took their loving brothers to their bosoms, and explained to them that the "manufacturers would not do business without making a profit, and could not if they would." The men were convinced. The "friendly spirit" prevailed; and as the men were acting "in the interest of all concerned," they dropped their request.

It is no flickering light that shot its tongues skyward from the office of the Howard & Morse Manufacturing Company on that occasion. The men who requested an eight-hour day with a ten-hour pay were unconsciously driven by the class-pinch of the class-shoe; they instinctively proceeded from the correct theory

that they were fleeced; they instinctively proceeded from the correct sense that the pay they received represented but a small fraction of the wealth that they produced; they instinctively proceeded from the just feeling that there is antagonism between them and their employer. But—nursed and sodden in the mischievous notion of “the brotherly relations that underlie the Capitalist Class and the Working Class”—all their correct instincts were squashed, squashed to the extent that they bowed in submissive approval of the blunt class-admission of their employers that these “could not, if they would, and would not, if they could, do business without a profit.” In other words, these plundered workers subscribed to the capitalist principle that the plunder of the workers is legitimate capitalist revenue.

Nor is that all that the light, that went up from that scene, illumines. These men were just organized by the Gompers-Hanna A.F. of L.! Their request was the first fruit of their organization. What they were actually organized for their ready collapse betrays!

The pure and simple, Gompers-Hanna A.F. of L. organization of the workingmen is a duck set afloat with leaden clogs, fastened to its web-feet to insure drowning. Such organizations are set up for the express purpose of smothering the instinctive sense of the class-struggle, that, properly guided, would in short order hurl the parasite Capitalist Class off the back of the Working Class. And it is such systematic drowning and smothering, together with the convulsive sprawlings which accompany them, that the Kangaroo Social Democracy officially glorifies as “a noble waging of the class struggle”!

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

Uploaded August 2006