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EDITORIAL

THE STORY OF A STRIKE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

WITH this issue we start the publication, under the above heading, of a narrative that is of prime importance. It turns a battery of electric lights upon the Belmont labor lieutenants, together with their machinations in behalf of the employer, and against the Working Class. The document is important, not only because of its authenticity, the source from which it flows, and the source from which we reproduce it. It is not the work of an individual bolter from the despotism of craft Union leaders. It is the official report of the Strike Committee of a Union, embodied in an official protest to its national officers, the document being unanimously adopted by the Union. Nor is this all. It is a document issued, not by an obscure Local of some obscure Union. The document is the official and virtually unanimous declaration of a local of over 2,000 members, affiliated with an International Union of about 40,000 members, the said International Union being boasted of by its national officers and generally considered in Craft Union leadership as the “Ideal Union,” the model and pattern for all others—it is the Boston Local No. 97 of the International Cigarmakers’ Union! Nor yet is this all, in point of the value of the document as evidence. The document is taken verbatim, not from a handbill, but from the columns of the *Cigar Makers’ Official Journal* itself, dated July 15, 1906. There is one more feature to be pointed out in the document, going to show its value and the value of its reproduction. It is evident that for some reason or other, the Geniuses that preside over the paper, feared to suppress the matter wholly, but expected to minimize the consequences of publication by shutting down upon the paper. Be that as it may, the fact is that the issue of the *Journal* containing the document cannot now be had for love or money. We shall reproduce the document in full, together with the “answer” by Adolf Strasser, attached thereto, and the insanely vituperative language of which confirms the truth of the allegations in the document, and betrays the poisoned rat staggering in

his vomit. Although our readers are urged to read the document itself, here is a synopsis:

The Boston Union 97, by a vote of more than 2 to 1, adopted, on April 6, of this year, a new bill of prices and elected a strike committee to enforce it. The new bill of prices was, under the constitution, sent to the International President and submitted to a vote of the local unions. It was sustained by both, whereupon it was sent to the employers to take effect on May 7. The employers refused consent and asked for a conference. On May 2 the conference took place. On the side of the cigarmakers were the strike committee and, as it seemed, Messrs. Adolf Strasser, a national officer of the International Union, and Willard Best, also a member of the International Union, with credentials from the national headquarters as “arbitrators” in the dispute.

The conference lasted three hours, during which the strike committee beat the manufacturers to a standstill; nevertheless the manufacturers refused absolutely to accept the entire bill of prices. At that point, the “arbitrator,” Strasser, who, together with his fellow-arbitrator Best, had remained silent during the discussion, rose, drew from his pocket and read a paper containing a resolution which he had prepared in advance behind the committee’s back. The purport of the resolution was that both he and his fellow “arbitrator” Best were of the opinion that work be continued until May 21, at the old bill of prices, in the meantime further negotiations and conferences to be held to the end of insuring the harmonious relations of the manufacturers and their men. The Strasser-Best proposal implied the postponement of action by the Union for two whole weeks, May 7 having been the date fixed by the strike committee. The manufacturers readily and unanimously accepted the proposal; the strike committee declined to accept the proposal, and decided to refer it, together with the manufacturers’ objections, to a meeting of the members of the Union. Thereupon a scene took place that is typical of Belmont-Gompers Union officialdom. Mr. Strasser addressed the manufacturers with a harangue in the course of which he pronounced the manufacturers “right,” and the union as lacking intelligence, there being “not one per cent. of intelligence among them,” the large majority being subject to the “underground work of a few men who are enemies of the Union,” and being “incompetent and incapable of grasping the situation,” etc., etc. Subsequently, at a meeting of the strike committee Mr. Strasser let more of the scrawny cat out of the bag by charging Union 97 with “rebellion,” “as

their votes on international matters would prove.” When the strike committee recovered its breath after the Strasser onslaught upon the Union, it congratulated the manufacturers on their success in securing the services of “such an able defender as Mr. Strasser, who so ably defended the interests of the employers instead of that of the Union.” Is it at all surprising that earnings topple down, while capitalists and fakirs grow fat?

The Strasser proposition was defeated in the Union by the overwhelming vote of 1,107 against 316. The strike went thereupon into effect on May 7, and, despite the continued underhanded dealings of Messrs. Strasser and Best with the manufacturers and their efforts to interfere with the success of the strike, the manufacturers surrendered “under protest,” May 26, to the Union’s demands. A jury was elected by the Union from its own membership to pass upon the strike committee’s report; the jury accepted unanimously the protest, embodying the report submitted by the committee; and, finally, the same was adopted by virtual unanimity by the Union, and forwarded to the national headquarters for publication.

The long “answer” attached by Strasser sidesteps the charges and consists in a long, silly and vulgar fable about monkeys, skunks, owls, dogs, etc., and a bucketful of coarse abuse of Daniel De Leon, and calling the jury, elected by the Union, “self-constituted,” and the strike committee and jury-members “yellow dogs,” “liars,” “hypocrites,” “tricksters,” “scabs,” “vilifiers,” etc., etc., etc., besides nasty slurs at the S.T. & L.A. and the I.W.W.

In a nutshell, but now officially exposed, we here have a virtual repetition of the “Seidenberg” and the “Davies” {“Davis”?} affairs, culminating in the usual choice “arguments” with which the brigade of Gompers labor leaders, convicted with facts as traitors to the working class, and agents of the employer, “answer” the charges preferred against them.—Down with these bulwarks of the capitalist vampire!

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

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