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EDITORIAL

## THE GENERAL STRIKE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**T**HE document issued by General Secretary Trautmann of the I.W.W., with the consent of the Advisory Board, in answer to the proposition of the Globe, Ariz., Socialist party that a general strike of the workers be called in the matter of Haywood, Moyer and Pettibone, and published elsewhere in this issue,<sup>1</sup> is a bull's eye hit.



William E. Trautmann

The strike is a move, on the part of the workers for “improved conditions.” In keeping with its object is the posture of the strike. Men who ask for “improved conditions” do not ask for freedom. They ask for a lightening up of the yoke of slavery. That being the avowed posture of men on strike, their implied posture is the recognition of the capitalists’ possession of the establishment struck against. They may, or they may not, have it in their mind that the capitalist’s possession is wrongful; they may, or may not, have it in their mind that the capitalist’s right is usurpation; they may, or they may not, have it in their mind to overthrow the usurpation soon as they have the power Whether they have any of these views in their mind or not, the essence of their posture is not affected thereby. Unable, for the time being, to assert their own right, they recognize possession as they find it, and only seek alleviation. The strike, accordingly, is not a revolutionary act. The bare fact that workingmen on strike LEAVE the establishment in which they were at work is a recognition of the capitalist’s possession, and of their own impotence to overthrow such proprietary rights.

<sup>1</sup> [“Trautmann’s Answer to the Globe, Ariz., Socialist Party on Its Proposal for a General Strike,” *Daily People*, Feb. 17, 1907, to be appended at a future date.—R.B.]

In view of these facts the term “general strike” is a misnomer, and a contradiction in terms. The “general strike” on the minds of those who use it implies revolution. It implies, not the alleviation of conditions, but the overthrow of capitalist despotism. The endeavor to overthrow capitalism by the UNrevolutionary move, implied in the “strike,” of pulling out of the establishments in which the men work, and leaving such establishments, the “taking and holding” of which is essential to the revolution, in the possession of the capitalist class,—such an endeavor is an obvious absurdity. Not the “general strike,” but the “general lock-out” of the capitalist class is the term applicable to the thought in the minds of those who generally use the term “general strike.”

There is much in terms. Wrong terms are born of confusion, and they beget confusion. This is what is happening with all those, who, honestly, are now advocating the “general strike.” The confusion of thought that causes them to use a wrong term is intensified by the wrong term itself. The consequence is that they advocate a move from which only two classes of men, both to be equally eschewed by the working class, could profit. These two classes of men stand at opposite poles, in seeming—they are, at one pole, the capitalist agents in the Unions who are kept there to drive the workers into acts of foolhardiness; and they are, at the other pole, the “intellectual” or dilettante revolutionists, who crave for “sport.” Neither would suffer. All the suffering would be borne by the duped workers.

The day the working class are sufficiently organized to move as one man, that day will require no “strike,” general or otherwise. It is the Capitalist Class that would then go on strike—with the workers in possession.

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

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