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EDITORIAL

NOW 'TIS THE BUILDING TRADES.

By DANIEL DE LEON

IT shall never be said, at least with justice, of capitalist society, that it furnishes no object lessons to illustrate principle by.

It is a principle that holds good in all matters that, to build safely, you must build soundly; that a flaw in the foundation flourishes in the architrave, asserts itself for all time, and becomes the dominant factor. Of the deep philosophy of this principle the mammoth lockout declared by the brick and lumbermen is furnishing a striking object lesson.

The building trades are what is called “extensively organized,” and yet to this day the drivers have been left un-unionized. It is obvious that the drivers hold a “key position.” With them on strike, all other branches are crippled. Conversely, with the assistance of the drivers, any branch is well protected. The other branches are not ignorant thereof, and many an attempt was made to unionize the drivers; but all failed. Tho’ many reasons might be mentioned, the real one is that the structure of pure and simple unionism starts with a flaw,—the craft flaw. The pure and simple union is not reared on the solidarity of the working class, it is reared on the identical principle that small middle class men organize on. There is log-rolling, but no solidarity. Hence, the spirit of the Labor Movement being smothered, and the spirit of small capitalism being blown into the nostrils of the thing, the result is an “abortion,” a “monstrosity,”—a thing that, tho’ made up of Labor, acts Capitalistically. Once on the capitalist field, the results are obvious,—capitalistic mutual cutting of one another’s throats.

A chain is no stronger than its weakest link. The weak thing in pure and simple unionism is that it excludes the revolutionary ingredient, Labor’s Solidarity. Brought to the test, the chain snaps,—as it is doing.

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