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EDITORIAL

RETROSPECT OF THE BROOKLYN STRIKE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE announcement having been officially made from the headquarters of the striking shoe workers of Brooklyn that the strike is called off, hunger, after a four months' strenuous struggle, compelling the men to surrender, a rapid retrospect of the memorable event is opportune.

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There is no bona fide strike without it concerns working class, not individual workingmen, interests. There is not, there has not been for fully twenty years, a single strike concerning working class interests that did not, either from the start, or later in the course of its development, include some Labor-lieutenant of the employer among the foe.

The shoeworkers' strike exemplified the fact. Starting among the unorganized workers in unorganized shops, it speedily reached out and drew in the shoe workers organized in Tobin's A.F. of L. Union. The call to working class duty, which marshalled the unorganized shoeworkers of Brooklyn against the employer, found its speedy echo among the Tobin men. These recognized in the grievances, that the unorganized had rebelled against, the essence of grievances that they themselves smarted under. Tobin of the Civic Federation and the capitalist were perceived to be one. The strike developed openly into a battle for emancipation from the two-headed exploiter—A.F. of L. "labor leader," as well as employer, a necessary feature of all healthy Labor uprising.

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The term "Organized Labor" has been juggled with. The most completely disorganized body of workingmen is that of the A.F. of L. To the extent that it is organized it is organized against the proletariat at large, and against its own membership. Evidence is furnished glaringly at A.F. of L. conventions where the

epithet “Scab!” is common, being freely bandied by the delegates of the several “Unions.” What the A.F. of L. calls organizing is to shackle workingmen, and place the end of the chain in the hands of the Civic Federation Top-Capitalists.

The Brooklyn shoe strikers were clear upon the point. Being clear they fell not victims to the superstition that A.F. of Hellism finds necessary to raise and foment regarding the iniquity of “Rival Unions,” or “Dual Unions.” Boldly the strikers organized and set up their own Union against that of Tobin. Rivals aim at the same object. The strikers’ aim was exactly the opposite of Tobin’s. He, a lackey of capitalists, aims at sharing the plunder levied by the capitalist upon the workingmen: they aimed at stopping the plunder. No “Rival,” no “Dual” Union there. Freedom from superstition is a condition precedent for Labor’s emancipation. The “Rival,” or “Dual” Union is a battering ram against Civic Federationism that has an important role to play in the Social Revolution.

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True to its stainless tradition of loyalty to proletarian interests, the Socialist Labor Party’s press stood by the striking shoeworkers of Brooklyn from start to finish. Regardless of the circumstance that the strike was managed by an agent of a body which, though it slid from the sound principle enunciated by the I.W.W.—“the unification of the working class upon the political as well as the industrial field”—and fell into that of veiled and unveiled dynamite, still sails under the false name of I.W.W., the S.L.P. press took cognizant only of the actual conduct of the said agent. Warned, as he was, that, if he indulged in the Anarchist preachments which characterized his conduct at McKees Rock in Pennsylvania, and which cost the proletariat of the place so dearly, fire would be instantly opened upon him from these columns, his conduct was strictly that of the true I.W.W. in economic battle. Only the methods of civilized Labor were advocated; all utterance tending to rowdyism was left out; he even urged the men to carry not even penknives about them, lest, one thing leading to another, a riot harmful to the workers might ensue.

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At all points for LABOR, that is, CIVILIZED LABOR, the shoe workers’ strike in Brooklyn was an event. Such events are never “lost.” They are but preparatory

incidents for the final event that will install the Industrial Republic, the working class having been united on the political as well as the industrial field.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
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slpns@slp.org