

EDITORIAL

## THE “DRESSED STONE” DECISION.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**T**HE decision of the Court of Appeals of this State, rendered on the 8th instant, and declaring unconstitutional the “Dressed Stone Law,” would seem to turn upon a very humble subject. So it does. But there is nothing so humble occurring at this stage of social evolution, that does not teach its convincing lesson. This decision is particularly eloquent.

The stone dressing business has not yet reached the monopoly stage: it is still at the small producers’ or middle class stage: a swarm of petty firms are engaged in it in this State, and, consequently, have to compete here with the product of larger firms located in other States. In the course of this competitive struggle, several of the firms in this State, and led by one of them located in Brooklyn, fell upon the plan of curtailing competition by excluding from the New York market stone dressed in other States. The scheme was a purely middle class one; an incident in the struggle of capitalist with capitalist. In order to encompass it, the aid of the Legislature was needed. The petty capitalist interests, interested in the scheme, did not storm the Legislature under their own colors. They were too wise for that. They set up the colors of “Labor,” and, so as to give a color to their pretences, they proceeded to enlist the aid of “Labor.” Assisted by one of their Labor Lieutenants, a notorious Labor Fakir, William O’Brien, and leader of a stone cutters’ Union, a resolution was adopted by the Union recommending the passage of a law that should exclude stone, dressed in other States, from being admitted to the markets of New York. The resolution was then rushed through other Labor Organizations as a “Labor Matter,” intended to protect the stone cutters of New York, and it finally was turned into a “Labor Law” at Albany. That is the law that the Court of Appeals just annulled, or repealed,—and thereby re-emphasized a profound principle in Socialist tactics.

It is a principle, fundamental in Socialist tactics, that the Working Class can share nothing, out of any alliance with Middle Class Interests, but their defeats.

Alluring as are the promises held out by these to Labor, they would not, where they could, fulfil their promises, even in the exceptional cases of actual triumph: so soon as triumphant, the Middle Class becomes inspired with the full Capitalist spirit; but triumph for the Middle Class is, at best, an exceptional affair; at this date it is no longer possible. Labor, whenever inexperienced enough to allow itself to be cajoled into taking a hand in the struggles of its Middle Class exploiters with their economic superiors, can now participate only in the bruises, the sorrows and the mortifications that are the sole trophies now reserved for the Middle Class in such struggles.

And that is the plight that the stone cutters, the allies of the stone-cutting firms in this State, now find themselves in, besides being disgraced by the pettiness of their shipwrecked aspirations.

“Narrow” may seem the doctrine that would guide a Labor Organization in hooting out of its hall any employers’ proposition to join hands “for mutual benefit,” and “intolerant” may seem the principle that would guide such an organization in driving from its midst, as a vile procurer and lackey of its fleecers, the member who would introduce such propositions. But Truth is narrow, and Facts are intolerant; and the two, combined and matured into Experience, imperatively dictate the warning:

“War to the finish, no alliance with the Capitalist Class, an eternal vigilance against its lieutenants,—the Labor Fakir!”

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