

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 1, NO. 328.

NEW YORK, FRIDAY, MAY 24, 1901.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

CAUSE AND EFFECT.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE despatch from New Haven, published in yesterday's issue, giving an account of the brazen impudence with which the Winchester Repeating Arms Company lied in a circular to its employees on the treatment they receive, will seem less amazing when a certain other circular is considered, which was issued by the leaders of the Elm Lodge of the International Association of Machinists to the same men. When the circular of the Company is read by the light of the Elm Lodge circular, the effrontery of the former is quickly understood to be but the effect of the dense stupidity or rank treason of the latter: The Company proceeds from the theory that men who can put up with such ignorant or traitorous leadership, and swallow such stuff, must have memories and judgment short enough to swallow the Company's stuff also.

The Elm Lodge circular tells the men that the Winchester Company "fear the Union," and it explains that fear with this reasoning:

"They know that you outnumber them ten to one."

The path of the "Pure and Simple" Trade Union, that is to say, of the O'Connell, Gompers, etc., style of Unionism, lies strewn with the wrecks of men and Unions that grounded their "strength" upon the theory embodied in the above passage. So far from excess of employees' numbers over employers' being a source of strength to the workers in the shop, it is a source of positive weakness. In the measure in which the disparity, between the number of the employees and the fewness of the employers, has increased, the workers have grown weaker, the employers stronger; the economic condition of the workers has declined, the economic condition of the employers has improved. It stands to reason. One employer has ninety-nine fewer stomachs to provide for than a Union with one hundred men on strike. As, moreover, the employer always starts with a full purse, while the Union inevitably starts with a weaker one, it follows that the more the employees outnumber their

employer the weaker they are, because he can hold out so much longer than they without starving. This fact may, at one time, have escaped notice; the exhilaration that numbers inspire may have once blinded the leaders, and caused them to fail to detect real weakness below the superficial appearance of strength. Once, a dozen times, these leaders may have builded upon numbers, and been pardonable. But in this year of grace, with all the experience back of them of scores on scores of instances that went to prove their theory false, with strikes and Unions smashed just because the men outnumbered the employers, again bob up serenely with the same battered and exploded theory, and again launch an economic or trade organization with numbers as its sole "element of strength," is to betray either a density that disqualifies a man from leadership, or a treasonable purpose that entitles such leaders to be kicked out at the double quick.

But this is not the worst of it!

The tremendous figure, by which the Working Class outnumbers the Capitalist Class, is not necessarily an element of weakness; it may be an element of strength, of overpowering strength. It is an element of weakness on the economic field: one hundred labor stomachs to feed require one hundred times as much food as one capitalist stomach. But numbers ARE an element of strength on the political field: one hundred Labor votes will snow under one capitalist vote. Accordingly, to insist upon the excess of numbers where such excess is a source of weakness (the economic field), and to neglect to wield the excess of numbers where such excess is a source of power (the political field), is an act either of stupidity or of treason on the part of a labor leader in the year 1901. And that is just what the getters-up of the Elm Lodge circular have been guilty of.

"No politics in Unions!" cry these gentry. In other words these labor leaders of Pure and Simpledome urge their rank and file to throw away the club (their class-conscious political ballots), with which they can knock down their fleecers, and they urge their rank and file to take up the club (their empty pockets and stomachs multiplied by their excess of numbers) that generally turns into a boomerang with which the workers are themselves knocked down!

Do the O'Connells, the Gomperses, etc., persist in this blunder out of pure ignorance? Do they persist in it out of well-paid treason to the rank and file, whom they have thus regularly led to slaughter?

It matters not which theory is the correct one to the Winchester Repeating Arms Company, or any other capitalist concern. The result is the same. Seeing the

rank and file allowing itself to be thus regularly buncoed, these capitalist concerns reason this way:

“If the men can be thus buncoed by their leaders, why can’t they be buncoed by us.”

The result of this reasoning, backed up by Elm Lodge circulars, is Winchester Repeating Arms Company circulars to their employees.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded March 2006