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EDITORIAL

## WHERE MRS. WELLS ERRED.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**A** MEEK man, as reported, having meekly asked Mrs. Borrmann Wells, on December 4th, where she thought was the place of several women he knew, who expected to hold that evening a meeting to prohibit child labor—"was their place at that meeting, or at the meeting to be held that same evening at Carnegie Hall in the interest of woman suffrage?" the lady answered: "I would have them attend the suffrage meeting, and give them the right to vote. When we have the right to vote we'll go to Congress, not as we would have to go now, saying, 'Please, good sirs, prohibit child labor.' No, we would saying, 'Here, you men, frame laws prohibiting child labor, or we'll bombard you at the next election with one hundred thousand, two hundred thousand—at an rate a sufficient number of votes to insure that you who are crushing the lives out of children are not elected."

Very beautiful—but not war.

From whom are the votes to come? From the men and the women who are doing the crushing of the lives out of children? From the male and the female members of the class the glitter of whose eyes and the rosiness of whose cheeks is extracted from the eyes and cheeks of the proletarian working children? Surely not. If the votes are to come at all they must come from the male and the female proletariat itself.

Child labor is heinous; but child labor is the consequence of a previous heinousness—the starvation wages of the proletariat. A powerful weapon with which starvation wages are enforced is the injunction. Bryan promised, if not to abolish, yet to dull the edge of the injunction sword, and he made the promise obedient to the revolt that has been going up among the proletariat against the Injunction Terrorism. Bryan was overwhelmingly defeated. Where did the labor

vote go to? Almost solidly for Injunction Taft. Was it that the male proletariat changed their mind regarding the Injunction? Not at all. It was that they justly concluded a live dog is better than a dead lion. They realized they could do nothing unless alive, and could enjoy no reform unless alive to enjoy it. The Taft class threatened a general shut-down if Taft was defeated. Taft's defeat spelt to these male proletarian voters "s-t-a-r-v-a-t-i-o-n"—and they voted against starvation.

Will the vote go otherwise, whatever the issue, if women proletarians hold the vote? The same logic that stampeded the male proletarian vote from the anti-injunction Bryan to the pro-injunction Taft, will again, and yet again stampede the proletarian vote away from and in the same direction, whether the women's votes are added to the men's or not.

Under capitalism universal suffrage, in and of itself, simply adds to the poll of the top-capitalist. Universal suffrage, in and of itself, multiplies the top-capitalist's political voices. Universal suffrage, for the proletariat, awaits to be supplemented by that which alone will "put a bone" into the suffrage—the class-conscious, and integrally constructed economic organization. Without such an organization, the only one able to counterstroke the threat of shut-downs, the addition of women proletarians to the electorate will have for its only effect the swelling into still larger hundreds of thousands the political majority of the class the sauce to whose meat is the marrow of child labor.

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

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