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EDITORIAL

THE MACHINIST FIASCO.

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THE Machinists, during several long years, have been preparing for the general strike in their attempt to obtain a nine-hour day. Those years of agitation and of so-called organization, all the special assessments, building up of a treasury, all the words, printed and spoken, found them on Monday morning utterly unprepared for the strike. It was not definitely known whether or not there would be a strike. It was uncertain, in case a strike was called, whether the men would come out or stay in. Mr. O'Connell, president of the I.A.M., promptly left the possible field of action and went to Washington, where there was no chance of a strike. He went there to "direct things," but he did not know what there was to direct, and away from the fight, he was not in a position to direct, in the event of there being anything directable.

He claims to have 150,000 Machinists organized. Last Saturday he thought it probable that 100,000 of them would strike. Early yesterday he was certain that 50,000 would strike. That leaves 100,000 men who have either obtained the nine-hour day without striking, or else who refuse to strike.

The number of employers who have acceded to the demands of the men is so trifling that it is improbable that 2,000, all told, are affected. Why then this sudden loss of 48,000 strikers? Have they found some new and improved method of "reconciling" capital and labor?

Then of the 50,000 "organized" men who originally were not to strike, there is only a small percentage who have the nine-hour day. They were ignored in the probabilities, and those unacquainted with the standing of the Machinists rushed at the conclusion that they did not need to strike because they already had the much-desired nine-hour day. But they did not have it, and it had not been offered to them. Ten per cent. of the 150,000 members whom O'Connell preposterously claims do not receive ten hours pay for nine hours work. Yet there was no threat of this little body of 50,000 men striking, although "all machinists were to strike."

The cutting away of 50,000 at one stroke, and the cutting away of another 50,000 at the next stroke, was followed by the cutting away of 25,000 more men as soon as the strike was called. That leaves 25,000 men who will fight for the nine-hour day, and 125,000 who either have got it, or else refuse to fight. But these men, this band of 25,000 stalwarts, are fighting only according to "official reports." Some of them are out, and some of them are working away cheerily at their lathes with no thought of risking a conflict. They belong to the "Union," it is true, but they belong to the "Union" only because it is easier, in some places, through such membership to hold a job.

The present aspect of the "general strike" makes it one of the most pitiful and ridiculous things that ever occurred in the history of pure and simpledom. It is pitiful to have such a farce enacted in the name of the working class. It is pitiful to have such fakirs playing fast and loose with the cause of labor. It is ridiculous because of the years of work which went towards consummating this strike, and of the fact that all the work resulted in such a dwindling handful of men being ready to strike.

If it is true that the men refused to go out, then the discipline of the I.A.M. is worse than useless. If the men were not prepared to go out, then the efforts at organization among the Machinists has been time wasted. If the strike was only a bluff, then the Machinists' officers have been guilty of criminally misleading the men.

Until the time arrived for the strike to take place, "enthusiasm" poured in from many distant points. There were thousands and tens of thousands of anxious Machinists straining at the leash. But Monday, when they were unleashed, they took advantage of their freedom from restraint to return humbly to work. That they will remain there, there can not be doubt, and that the men who struck will soon struggle anxiously for an opportunity to get back, there can be no doubt either.

Organized Scabbery threw all its strength into the effort, and the result is: 150,000 men "organized:" 100,000 men sure to strike: 50,000 certain to strike: 25,000 men determined to strike: 5,000 men who went out.

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