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EDITORIAL

NOT STRAWS BUT BEAMS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

IF straws will tell the direction of a stream, what will not beams? What “Industrial Peace” means, what “harmonious relations” between Capital and Labor stands for in the Civic Federation, and what is the nature of the “settlements” contemplated by that body has received fresh and emphatic answer in the paper workers’ industry.

For several months there was friction between the paper workers and the paper mills. The mills had been running six days continuously in two shifts, or “tours,” of twelve hours each. The men objected to the system; its effect was to deprive them alternately of their Sunday. They demanded a system under which the mills should shut down from 6 p.m. on Saturday to 7 a.m. Monday. The mills proposed a number of changes, but as none of these wholly excluded Sunday work, the men rejected all proposals, and held out upon their own lines. The issue, accordingly, was, Shall the men all enjoy their Sundays? The men said, Yes; the mills said, No. A dead lock ensued; a strike became imminent, affecting about 50,000 men employed in twenty or thirty of the leading mills. At that juncture the Civic Federation stepped in. It was to avert a strike: it did not avert the strike; it was to effect a settlement: it did effect a settlement. And what was that? The men are to go on to work under the old system until May 1st; after that, well, after that, negotiations would be resumed. In other words, the settlement was a complete victory for the employer,—just as in all the previous “settlements” made by the Civic Federation. Just as in all the previous settlements made by that body, the capitalist comes off on top; screened by the presence of the “Labor Leaders” on the Committee, the capitalists succeed in what, without such aid, it were hard for them to accomplish: they narcotize the workers and dupe the rank and file.

“Harmonious relations” between Capital and Labor, as understood by the

capitalist class, stands for the “harmonious relations” that exist between the lamb and the lion with the former inside of the latter’s belly. And the placing of such birds of evil omen as the Gomperses, the Whites (alias Korkowinski), the Sargents, the Lynches, etc., etc., by the capitalists, on the “Industrial Peace” Commission, is intended only to oil the process of swallowing the workingmen.

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

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