

EDITORIAL

## JESSIE ASHLEY ON SABOTAGE

By DANIEL DE LEON

**A**FTER stating, in the Pittsburgh, Pa., *Justice*, of January 18 that “Haywood’s opponents” are industrious in “misrepresenting” sabotage as meaning “a form of violence,” Jessie Ashley, of the Socialist party, proceeds to observe:

“Nothing is further from the truth, and I challenge any opponents to produce a bona fide definition of the word from the land of its origin to support such a distortion of fact. The most authoritative definition in English is given in Louis Levine’s review of the French labor movement, where he defines it as ‘the hampering by all means of the process of production and distribution.’”

We are informed that Jessie Ashley is a lawyer. She being such, we humbly ask the lady for enlightenment on the following points of that branch of jurisprudence known as Evidence:

First—Does not an authoritative statement mean a statement that is entitled to acceptance because of its proceeding from a proper and duly sanctioned source? Without in the remotest sense meaning to derogate from the estimable qualities of Louis Levine, whose acquaintance it is our privilege to have made, what evidence is there of the gentleman’s speaking “with authority”? From whom—from what popular sanction, or from what organization does he derive his authority? Take Josh Billings—indubitably a widely read, besides being an estimable gentleman,—would his numerous “ipse dixits” on the statute be acceptable in any court of law as “authoritative,” according to the canons of evidence?

Second—Does not the law of evidence bank upon the Euclidean principle of mathematics that the lesser is included in the greater? Louis Levine’s definition of sabotage “is the hampering by all means of the process of production and distribu-

tion.” Does not “all means” mean “all,” and not “some” means only? Does not sand-bagging, or the blowing up of a machine with dynamite, or poisoning, or theft, if practised in or about the shop, “hamper the process of production and distribution,” as well as persistent indulgence in the innocent practice of “soldiering on the job”? And are not the former methods “forms of violence”?

Third—Whether Louis Levine speaks with authority or not, seeing that his definition is accepted by Jessie Ashley as authoritative; and, furthermore, seeing that the definition is expressively broad enough to embrace crime; is not Jessie Ashley estopped from denying the correctness of the concept of sabotage which is industriously spread by Haywood’s opponents?

While awaiting with the humility that is becoming to our benighted state of mind—a state of mind so benighted as to betray us into making “misrepresentations” of the meaning of sabotage, and to utter thereanent opinions than which “nothing is further from the truth”—while awaiting to be enlightened by our fair jurist, and until so enlightened, we shall adhere to the facts and the history of sabotage, as well condensed by H.J. Schade, the comrade whom Section Los Angeles of the Socialist Labor Party has placed in charge of the S.L.P. column of the *Los Angeles Municipal News*, and who, in that paper’s issue of the 15 of January, says on the subject:

“Sabotage is a French term for tactics as old {as} human society. As far back is the Alexandrian age they had court tasters to guard the rulers against the sabotage of the cooks, but just as your ‘ham and egg’ dinner tastes better if called Table d’Hote, or ‘coffe and’ tastes better if called a la Carte, so do silly tricks such as putting emery in bearings, soap in glue pots, dead cats in syrup vats, kerosene in bread, etc., sound terribly potent, if it is called sabotage. That workingmen’s wives buy sabotaged syrup and kerosened bread, is not realized by the short sighted sabotager.”

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