

EDITORIAL

THE GARMENT WORKERS' STRIKE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE strike of the Garment Workers having begun just as the National Executive Committee of the Socialist Labor Party went into its January semi-annual session, about the first thing done was the adoption of a resolution pledging the Party's support to its fellow workers on the firing line of the class-struggle, and warning the men to keep an eye upon their national officers.¹

The Party made, and, to this day, continues to make good its pledge. And events have taken charge of making good the warning.

Over the head of the rank and file in hand-to-hand struggle with the exploiting class, the national officers of the men on strike "settled." And the act of betrayal was praised and condoned by the Jewish daily organ of the Socialist party, the *Vorwaerts*. Conspiracies against the Working Class by A.F. of L. leaders, in alliance with privately-owned S.P. papers, are common occurrences. Yet common as the occurrences are, it is rare they exhibit so many marks of turpitude as the conspiracy did in this particular instance. It proved an overdose.

Strikers who have found themselves betrayed have generally emptied their rage in the air—and scattered in a panic. Occasionally they have turned upon a leader, and given him a beating. The act usually was an outburst of impotent rage; the final result was ever the same,—to scatter to the four winds.

It happened otherwise in the instance of the Garment Workers. Very little time and strength was spent in paying the tribute of human weakness—some of the misleading labor lieutenants of the capitalist class were kicked into the ditch and the *Vorwaerts* office was smashed; but the sobriety that is the distinctive mark of strength, conscious strength, speedily regained ascendancy. Instead of scattering,

¹ [Appended, page 3, below]

the betrayed strikers assembled at their headquarters; re-organized their squadrons; consolidated their forces; chose a committee—all attempts of the Abe Cahanic *Vorwaerts* tribe to push itself in being promptly detected and blocked—that represented the manhood and womanhood of the proletariat on strike; and unitedly turned their faces, as flint, back upon the capitalist foe.

This was well done; it was bravely done; it was nobly done. But the deed was a daring one, that flung the gage of battle not in the teeth of the employer merely—in the teeth of the Labor Fakir also.

The Garment Workers must now be prepared to have to fight the scab, not the single scab as unorganized individual strike-breakers, but as an organized body, organized by the A.F. of L. leadership, flying the “Union” colors, and whooped up for a money consideration by the privately-owned S.P. press. The Garment Workers must now be prepared to fight under the cloud of untold vilifications heaped upon their heads—the vilification of “scabs!” being loudest.

And this is as it should be. The Labor Movement will not be given the opportunity to fight only one foe at a time. It will have to fight the whole combine—capitalist class, along with its many-colored obscene retainers,—all together. With this combine the Garment Workers have grappled. It is the heroism, which, whether immediately successful or not, is bound ultimately to triumph. It is the heroism which deserves applause because it is a constructive heroism.

FROM *WEEKLY PEOPLE*, JANUARY 11, 1913

**NAT'L EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE,
SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY,
ACTS ON STRIKES IN THIS CITY.**

**RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED APPEALING FOR SUPPORT FOR
GARMENT WORKERS AND HOTEL EMPLOYEES.**

THE below resolutions, presented to the Monday, January 6 session of the National Executive Committee, Socialist Labor Party, by Boris Reinstein, member for New York, and John C. Butterworth, member for New Jersey, was [sic] unanimously adopted by the Committee.

WHEREAS, The Garment Workers Union and the Hotel Employes Union of this city are on the economic war-path known as the Strike, in numbers so large as to place upon their action the prima facie stamp of the Class Struggle;

WHEREAS, The prima facie aspect of the strike is confirmed by the conditions against which these fellow wage slaves are in revolt—the Hotel Employees against the effort of the Master Class to reduce them back to the feudal status of menials, the Garment Workers against the attempt of the Master Class to crush them into abject wage slavery;

WHEREAS, The methods of brutality resorted to by the Master Class against these fellow wage slaves goes further to confirm the class struggle aspect of the event; hence, the impossibility of lasting friendly relations between Labor and the Capitalist; hence, the expectation that the strike may mark a further step towards the final overthrow of capitalism, and the establishment of the reign of Peace on Earth through the Socialist or Industrial Republic; therefore be it

RESOLVED, By the National Executive Committee of the Socialist Labor Party, in regular semi-annual session assembled on this 6th day of January 1913, and in obedience to the orders of the Twelfth National Convention of the S.L.P., July 1908, as follows:

“That the Socialist Labor Party, while retaining the right to criticize and expose all wrongfully constructed and conducted labor organizations, and exercising its duty to do so, emphatically maintains its position that it is the duty of every member of the Party to stand on the side of the workers whenever a bona-fide strike or other conflict for improved conditions of labor occur, either as a spontaneous action of the workers or as a result of action taken by any labor organization whatever,”

And be it further

RESOLVED, That we appeal to all members and friends of the S.L.P to give the strikers all possible support and encouragement; and that we also urge the men and women on strike to be mindful that “eternal vigilance is the price of liberty”; that the success of their present struggles will largely depend upon the control of their endeavors and their leaders by the rank and file of the strikers themselves, and by the strikers being guided in all their actions by the recognition of the principle of the absolute solidarity of the working class; and be it further

RESOLVED, That these resolutions be sent, with request for publication, to the Socialist and labor press.

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