

Daniel De Leon

Editorial: Voting for the Black List

In a recent issue the *Rocky Mountain News* of Denver, Col., gave the following account of the destitution suffered by a number of railroad employees who are now blacklisted for their participation in the late strike:

The great A.R.U. strike occurred July 1. Since that time there have been 500 men in Denver, supporting some 200 families, who have never been able to secure any work. They have never asked to be taken back on the same road, but they find themselves blacklisted on every road. One man claims to have had ten different jobs since then, at points ranging all the way from Raton to Denver. Another has had fifteen, and in every instance both were discharged as soon as it was found that they had been connected with the strike. The men claim that there is plenty of work, and that the roads are even running trains short-handed, because they will not employ the men who were in the strike. These men were, many of them, imprisoned, and have since been deprived of work four months and a half. They feel that they have been sufficiently punished, especially as no acts of violence were committed during the strike in Denver.

There are now about 1,000 people in Denver, including the men and those depending on them, who are in a destitute condition, and will soon be starving, although there is work enough for all on the roads. Unable to pay rent, they have squatted in the bottoms and are living

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there in tents. The Greeley farmers sent them 220 sacks of potatoes about two weeks since, which were divided among 110 families. They got out a circular some time since petitioning the roads to give them work, and secured the signatures of fifty business firms of the city, but it has had no effect.

The men do not blame the local railroad people. They believe orders have been issued on all the roads from their Eastern headquarters. These men simply ask a chance to live. They simply want to be let alone, and not persecuted and hounded from place to place. They ask no favors. They simply protest against discrimination. They are now objects of charity, and the citizens must soon contribute to keep them from starving, while at the same time they are willing and able to work, and there is plenty of work to be done.

Similar reports are coming from many other railroad centres throughout the West; and we dare say that none of the blacklisted men could escape persecution by removing to the Eastern States, for it is certain that means have been taken by the railway plutocracy to enforce the black list everywhere with the same degree of effectiveness.

In commenting on these facts a Canadian labor paper, the *Ottawa Journal*, observes: "The men who, through organization, sought to protect themselves, and now find that capital has crushed organized labor, have voted to continue the very tyranny that oppressed them. When labor had the ballot—the only power by which it can save itself—it did not use it." Such is unquestionably the case. But the *Ottawa Journal* furthermore says: "Labor threw its weight against its only friend in politics and in legislation, the People's party." This is gross absurdity.

The People's party has never been, is not now and can never be the friend of the wage-laboring class in general and of organized labor in particular. Its professions of friendship are of the same deceitful character as the similar ones of the

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Republican and Democratic parties. They are similarly intended to catch the labor vote and equally false in the light of the national programme of the party, as supplemented by the utterances of its leading organs and politicians, and by the actual conduct of its few representatives in the House and Senate of the United States.

The wonder is not that the People's party failed to receive the unanimous vote of the wage-laboring class, but that it received any portion of it. The fact that there are workingmen in the Populist movement certainly shows to some extent the growing dissatisfaction of their class with the older boodle parties; but it shows even more clearly a deplorable lack of that class consciousness which is the only effective safeguard of the proletariat against tomfoolery and the primary essential of its emancipation.

It is, indeed, foolish to argue, as some do, that the so-called People's party, founded and controlled by middle-class interests for middle-class purposes, can ever be converted into a labor party by the accession of large numbers of wage workers; for, if this were true of the People's party, it would also be true of the Republican and Democratic parties, the rank and file of which are workingmen.

Experience and reason have long taught this plainest of all political truths, that the wage-laboring class has and can have no "friend" outside of its own class party. It is as a class and upon class lines that it must fight for the abolition of class rule, and its ability to achieve its own emancipation necessarily depends on its readiness to use for that purpose its only possible weapon, the Socialist Labor party.

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*A De Leon editorial transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the
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