

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 2, NO. 146.

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 1901.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

A CASE IN POINT.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE State of New York is just now the theatre of two incidents that, considered together, should lend material aid in clarifying both the position taken by the Socialist Labor Party, that only the class interests of the Working Class are the safe guide and tactics by which to overthrow capitalist tyranny, and the position taken by the Party's reform adversaries, that community of suffering is the proper guide and tactics.

The first of the two incidents is the rupture between the yardmen employed in New York by the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad, on the one hand, and the Company, on the other. An assistant yardmaster and a detective employed by the Company "fulfilled their duties," in such a way that the men refused to work under them. The Company refused to discharge these two "faithful and competent" slave-drivers. Thereupon a strike was declared.

The other incident is the marching, ten abreast, up to Gov. Odell of a Committee of the New York City Produce Exchange, complaining of freight discrimination by the New York Central Railroad against the Port of New York in shipments from Buffalo, and petitioning the Governor for relief.

Here we have two sets of sufferers: the capitalists, whose interests center around the Produce Exchange, and the workingmen employed in the freight yards of the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad in this city. Moreover, in this instance the sufferers have in common something more than suffering: they have a common enemy: their suffering arises from the arbitrariness of the identical corporation, the New York Central and the New Haven road being substantially under the same Board of Directors, with their main terminus on the same spot in this city, where the wrong complained of is perpetrated.

Is community of suffering in this case a sufficient bond to hold the sufferers together? Obviously, the answer depends upon whether both sets would get relief from that which would relieve either. Would they?

The relief that the yardmen seek amounts of {to?} having a smaller quantity of their flesh and marrow squeezed out of them for the benefit of the Company. The excellence of the work of the yardmaster and the detective complained against, their faithfulness and competence is merely the Company's technical way of saying that the two men are raising the amount of wealth which the Company fleeces its yardmen of and pockets. Now, then, no capitalist concern pockets these fleecings for itself alone. It shares the fleecings with other capitalist concerns: the larger the fleecing concern is, all the more imperative is this sharing, to however small an extent, with its fellow capitalist fleecers in other departments. This fact manifests itself in the general decline in prices; in this case, in the general decline in the cost of transportation. Now, then, would the capitalist concerns, centered around the Produce Exchange, favor such a relief to the yardmen on strike? Assuredly not. In the measure that there is a let-up on the yardmen, these capitalist concerns would suffer. They are all sharers in the wool clipped from the railroad workers. A positive bond of union does not and can not exist between these two sets of sufferers.

Important as this fact is in itself, it is still more important when closer looked into by the light of experience. It does not follow—because the class-source, from which each of these two sets of suffering flows, tear each other apart,—that there is no possibility of a “going together.” Not only is there such a possibility, but experience shows that it is a reality. Such diametrically opposed class interests have “gone together” again and again: there is not an election at which such “goings together” are not witnessed: aye, such “goings together” have been witnessed even in strikes. And what is the feature, inseparable from all such “goings together”? It is the duping of the Working Class: the using it for cat's paw; in short, such “goings together” invariably denote a complete abandonment of the workers' interests. The Produce Exchange Committee, for instance, may fuse with the yardmen, but only by way of getting these to pass resolutions condemning the Railroad for “discriminating against the Port of New York”, and, if an election is at hand, the capitalists interested in the question of freight will fight their battle behind the earthworks of “Organized Labor.” The question being settled, the workers will again be left to shift for themselves. And so in all other cases in which the Working Class is not marshalled in sharp, bold and direct antagonism to one and all the class interests that are not proletarian interests.

To lose sight, for one instant, of the class interests of the Working Class, to yield, but for a second, to the lure of sentiment, of common unity of suffering, is to

break the rudder of the Ship of the Labor Movement, and doom it to inevitable shipwreck. It is no accident that the Working Class of the land, led by the fusing or “going together” principle of harmony between Capital and Labor, lies to-day stranded on the beach of the Labor Movement; nor is it an accident that all “going together” political reform movements have been beached through wholesale desertions by sell-outs.

**Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded July 2006**