

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 12, NO. 242.

NEW YORK, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 1912.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

PATERSON'S I.W.W. STRIKE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

COMMENTING in its issue of February 14th upon the strike of the broad silk weavers in its town, the Paterson, N.J., *News*, after stating that some “denounce in no uncertain language” the organizer and leader of the strike, Rudolph Katz of the I.W.W., while others uphold him unconditionally and give him unrestricted praise as an organizer,” makes this observation:

“There is one thing, however, that is dead certain and that is that Mr. Katz or no one else could induce over 2,000 weavers to go on strike unless he could advance very excellent reasons for their doing so.”

This is hitting the nail on the head.

The reasons why 2,000 broad silk weavers, in fact., 4,500, should have risen in revolt in one hundred factories were indeed excellent—very excellent.

In the first place, low wages and high prices—the one so low the other so high that jointly they spell STARVATION, should be reason quite powerful enough to spur men and women, with a spark of manhood and womanhood to band together, and, in self-protection, throw down work.

In the second place, even if the first reason were not powerful enough, the prospect of intensified toil through the prospect of a four-loom system can not choose but add edge and point to the spur for revolt.

In the third place, even if this double reason did not possess propelling force enough, there was another.

Men who see a foe before them may not decide to take up arms. They may prefer to “observe” the foe for a spell, and “consider.” When, however, the foe sets himself in motion, and attempts an outflanking manœuvre with intent to fall upon them in the rear—then something has to be done, and done quick. This is what happened in Paterson. The strike may not have assumed its present proportions, it

may have remained circumscribed to the Doherty Mill, had not the Paterson Broad Silk Association manoeuvred to take the Doherty strikers from the rear. This they attempted with the aid of their labor lieutenants, the A.F. of L.-ite T. Morgan of the loomfixers and James Starr of the warpers, both of them, of course, John Goldenites. The two Goldenites, both employed at the Doherty Mill, pretended also to go out on strike. They joined the Doherty silk weavers, and almost immediately attempted to stampede the weavers into giving up the strike. Roundly, overwhelmingly, and repeatedly voted down, the two worthies took the bit into their own mouths, returned to work, and announced through the Paterson capitalist press that "the strike is settled." The manoeuvre failed. Instead of disconcerting the striking weavers, it brought them allies. The weavers in the other one hundred mills stopped "observing" the foe. Treason, the usual A.F. of L. treason to Labor, put into operation so glaringly, compelled action, some kind of action, and immediately.

Nor yet were these the only reasons for the weavers' action, for the specific action that they took. There was a fourth, a compelling one.

Men who find themselves between two fires frequently become rattled. The weavers of Paterson did not become rattled. The I.W.W. had been conducting the Doherty strike. I.W.W. literature and principles inspired the strike's agitation. There was no paltering in a double sense. The boldly sober demand of Labor, as promulgated by the Preamble of the I.W.W.,—the unification of the working class, upon the political as well as the industrial field, for redress of wrongs, and ultimate emancipation,—had all along been the expressly uttered slogan in the camp of the Doherty strikers. With such a call to direct their minds and steps there was no occasion for the rest of the Paterson weavers to be rattled either into the dementia of Anarchy, alias "Direct Action," or into the quagmire of "Independent Unionism," a quagmire the luring lights of which, in the interest of the A.F. of L., the Socialist party Officialdom of Paterson insidiously lighted. The Paterson weavers flocked to the I.W.W. standard, which Rudolph Katz had all along been holding aloft.

The Paterson *News* has reasoned rightly. Rudolph Katz advanced very excellent reasons. And the broad silk weavers grasped, and responded to the reasons.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded January 2013

slpns@slp.org