

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 9, NO. 166.

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13, 1908.

TWO CENTS.

EDITORIAL

CONSIDERATE OF EACH OTHER.

By DANIEL DE LEON

ON the December 10 hearing of the Ways and Means Committee, Robert S. Hastings, the representative of the gold-leaf industry, testified that the duty on gold leaf was now so low that suitable wages could not be paid to the men and women engaged in the industry. Mr. Hastings asked that the duty be raised from \$1.75 per package of 500 leaves to 50 cents per 100 leaves. In other words, Mr. Hastings demanded a raise of 75 cents—in the interest of his employes.

At this point the Democratic members of the committee muffed their chance. The question for them to have put to Mr. Hastings, on the spot, was: “Will you add, to the present wages that you pay, the increased duty that you demand?” Mr. Hastings would have been knocked out of breath. Love and affection for his employes is good enough as a pretence on the part of the protectionist. It never is meant for more. The protectionist knows that he buys his labor-power in the labor-market at the market price, and that, the supply being far above the demand, tariff or no tariff, tax or no tax, the price is low.

In justice to the tariff revisers, however, it must be admitted that, they were, perhaps, not such bad muffers, after all. After all, their not asking the question may have been a sign of shrewdness. Suppose they had asked the question, and suppose the protectionist had answered with this other question: “Will you engage to let your employes’ wages remain where they are if the tariff is lowered?” The effect of such a question would have been disastrous to free trade anatomy. How preposterous a question! Just think of keeping up wages at a high standard of cost of living, after the cost of living is lowered by free trade!

And so it goes on. On the Committee each side knows the other side better than it knows itself. Hence {each} is careful not to step too hard on the others’ toes.

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

Uploaded April 2010

slpns@slp.org