

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 9, NO. 225.

NEW YORK, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 1909.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

MILTON DAMMANN'S IMPROMPTU.

By DANIEL DE LEON

“IT is a question now as to whether the manufacturers or the Union will run the factories.” This is the pronouncement made by Mr. Milton Dammann, the Secretary and Counsel for the National Hat Manufacturers' Association. Mr. Dammann might have sat up all night, and yet failed to condense more sense than that compressed in as few impromptu words. The beauty of the sentence lies especially in that it covers the case, not in the hatters industry only, but in all industries.

Indeed, the question is as to whether the manufacturers (capitalist class) or the Union (working class) will run the factory (production, the Nation).

More than likely, most of the hatters on strike do not themselves realize as yet the nature of the struggle they are engaged in. More than likely, their craft Union horizon still bounds their perceptive faculties. Be this as it may, a marked feature of a social evolutionary process is that the forces which the evolutionary process makes against, are the first to appreciate and announce the tendency of the process. Long before the bourgeois actually realized whither their movement tended, and, consequently, long before they organized, conscious of their route, the feudal lordlings began foaming at the mouth, and to declare that the question was whether the anointed Lord or a rabble-rout of traders was to run the country.

Another feature of a social evolutionary process is that each victory, scored by the forces which the evolutionary process makes against, is an illustrated lecture delivered by the victors to the vanquished, and thereby marshalling these the way that they must go, the tactics that they must observe, and the goal that they must aim at. Long before the bourgeois began to score any victory deserving the name, they were vanquished repeatedly; each defeat conveyed its lesson; each lesson pointed to the tactics that the exigency demanded, and the goal that the bourgeois

should pursue.

Finally, a third feature of a social evolutionary process is that, not until the lessons, preached by the class that is to be overthrown to the class that is to do the overthrowing, are learned and acted upon by the latter, is order restored. The feverish condition of acute struggle, that such a conflict of classes implies, continues, repeating and re-repeating the turmoil under which alone the lessons can be preached. When the bourgeois had learned their lesson, then a thrill went through society, the thrill of new birth, and order was restored again.

These three features of a social evolution are magnificently condensed by Mr. Milton Dammann's impromptu utterance. Of course, the gentleman is wise without knowing it. But that does not detract from the wisdom of the utterance.

The hatters, now on strike, are being taught by their employers what strikers in all other trades are likewise taught. They are learning that the goal of Unionism is, not to bolster up capitalism, but to overthrow the same. They are being taught that such an aim can not be attained along craft Union and other Labor-dislocating organizations. They are being taught, in short, that the question is whether the capitalist class shall run the productive powers of the land, and thus run the Nation, or whether the job shall be assumed by the working class. The real question being thus pounded into the head of the working class, the necessity of a Union that embraces the whole class in one solid body—Industrial Unionism—is bound to be learned and acted upon.

The hatters, now of the school benches before the National Hat Manufacturers' Association, may or may not learn the whole lesson at one sitting. If not, they will need more sittings—strikes. But learn they will the lesson that the Milton Dammann's are striving to teach them

Let's all, in the meantime, learn to labor and wait.

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

Uploaded June 2010

slpns@slp.org