

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 12, NO. 200.

NEW YORK, TUESDAY, JANUARY 16, 1912.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

THE LAWRENCE STRIKE.

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TWENTY-five-thousand-throated is the warning that the textile operatives of Lawrence, Mass., are sounding to their fellow wage-slaves the land over on the favorite practice of the labor-fakir to pilfer pennies from their pockets to obtain improvements that the labor-fakir is foremost in rendering impossible of making good.

Their faces ground with overwork and under-pay, the wage-slave pants for an easing of the burden. He pants for higher pay; however small the increase, it means added sustenance to his underfed body. He pants for lower hours; however slight the decrease, it means relief to his overstrained muscles. The wage-slave's panting after such improvements is not merely an animal act. It is also a spiritual act, an act responsive to his class instincts. He produces the Nation's wealth; the capitalist appropriates the same. The wage-slave's instinct pushes him to and on the road that leads to the overthrow of the social system that keeps him in bondage, and mankind in the jungles. Every fibre of the wage slave's physical and spiritual composition throbs responsive to the suggestion of "relief."

This fact the labor-fakir seizes upon. A degenerate modern revival of the sufficiently ignominious plebs leader of olden Roman days, the labor-fakir traffics upon the dire needs and the aspirations of his class. Into the furnace of their wants he drops the suggestion of relief—higher pay, or lower hours, or both—and summons them to the financial support of his efforts "in their behalf." The suggestion never needs repetition: the Wants are too urgent for that; it is greedily accepted; neither, as a rule, does the call for financial backing need urging. The fakir then "deals" with the employer. The funds, wrung from the wage-slaves and dropped into his left side pocket, to promote his plans for relief, the fakir then balances by dropping into his right side pocket the contributions (in cash or stock) from the employer to render his

plan ineffective—and he goes at it.

The manner is simplicity itself. The ill-starred wage-slaves who give him their ear are filled by the fakir with hot air. To indoctrinate them on their class mission, let alone organize them into the squadrons necessary successfully to carry out the economic and political campaign upon which he started them—that would end his occupation. The labor-fakir needs the wage-slaves' misery whereby to levy blackmail upon the employer; he needs the employer wherewith to keep alive the wage-slaves' ire. Playing one against the other, the labor-fakir makes his wretched living.

Thus was the tragedy of the textile operatives' strike brought about.

The Massachusetts Legislature was pressed for a law reducing the operatives' hours of work from fifty-six to fifty-four hours a week. That move—good or bad, excellent or miserable, according as the agitation, set on foot among the operatives in favor of the law, was or was not supplemented by an agitation both political and economic, and a corresponding organization among the same men that would enable them to resist the certain effort to follow on the part of the employers to recoup themselves for the amount of profits that the reduction of hours would entail—was left by the labor-fakir wholly unsupplemented with such agitation and organization.

The consequence was inevitable. So soon the law went into effect the employers reduced wages “proportionally”—and the operatives, like soldiers who have been led into an ambush and suddenly find themselves enfiladed by the foe—resorted to the acts of despair that people in such a fix ever resort to.

The warning, now issuing from 25,000 throats in Lawrence, is one bound to be taken up by the many million throats of a wage-slave class long trepanned and still trepanned by the Labor-Fakir.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded December 2012

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