

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 6, NO. 278.

NEW YORK, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 4, 1906.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

“EVEN-HANDED” JUSTICE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE news from London is to the effect that, a bill being before the House of Commons concerning the liabilities of Trades Unions, Sir John Lawson Walton, the Attorney General, declared: “I do not think it right to create a special privilege for the proletariat.” Sir John is a perambulating lump of Even-handed Justice—as the article is conceived by the entrenched Ruling Class.

The bill is the outcome of a certain court decision known as the “Taff Vale Decision.” According to the decision the treasury of a Union was held seizable to answer in alleged damages, sustained by an employer against whom the Union was on strike. The theory upon which the decision was planted was logical from capitalist premises—the aim of capitalist society is the cumulation, by concentration into the capitalist’s hands, of the capitalized flesh, blood, bone and marrow of the Working Class: any act done to impede the course of the accumulation is wrongful, and redress is proper; the decision of the court was logical—the machinery of capitalist government is there to promote the aim of capitalist society; finally, logical was the physical enforcement of the court’s decision—the exercise of Might is an indispensable accessory, nay, it is an indispensable prerequisite to the maintenance of principle, whether the principle be Right or Wrong. The British Trades Unions objected to the decision. The objection was sane or insane, according to the ground taken. It was sane if it planted itself upon the theory above set forth, and was intended as the first move to up-turn the foundation upon which the decision correctly rested—upon the same principle that the fruit of a certain tree having been discovered to be bitter, the discovery becomes the reason for plying the axe to the root itself of the tree. It was insane if the objection ignored the theories above set forth, and was made in the hope that bitter fruit could be turned sweet and wholesome by objecting. Be this however, as it was, now that there is a labor

delegation in the House, the Liberal Attorney General has hastened to display his even-handed friendliness to Labor and Capital, by introducing the bill in question, which does everything, of course, except that which the Trades Unionists demand. To do that—free the Unions altogether from liability—the Liberal Attorney General considers improper, and he stigmatizes as the creation of “a special privilege for the proletariat.”

In his attitude of even-handedly holding the scales of Justice to proletarians and capitalists alike, Sir John is pictorial—as pictorial as the starter at the Derby would be if he gave the signal for the race to start between competitors one set of which was on foot and the other on horseback and said: “Now, boys, a free field and no favor!” No less pictorial, however, it must be admitted is the attitude of that labor delegation which seems to expect even-handed justice from the political agencies of the class that fleeces them.

There never can be a “special privilege” for the proletariat. While privileges exist they are enjoyable only by the ruling class. When the proletariat shall have thrown off the saddle of special privileges, there will no longer be any dominated class to strap that saddle on. Not after privileges does the proletariat strive; it strives after the abolition of privileges—Capitalism.

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Uploaded March 2009

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