

EDITORIAL

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE GOFF DECISION.

By DANIEL DE LEON

LABOR papers, and sympathizers with workingmen, are uttering themselves on the “outrageous” decision by Judge Goff restraining the striking cloakmakers from exercising rights heretofore sustained by the courts,—the right to “picket,” and the right to peaceably approach workmen who have taken their places, in the endeavor to persuade them to join the strike.

Those writing against the Goff decision fall back upon English law and court decisions, but, unfortunately for them, judge-made law is supplanting the statutes in England as rapidly as here, until it is an open question which country will have the “honor” of first forbidding workmen the right to strike it all.

The Goff decision serves, however, one useful purpose. It brings out the real issue in the conflicts between the capitalist and the working class: the issue of whether we shall have absolute Freedom or absolute Slavery. The conflict makes the issue so clear that it should serve to open the eyes of the entire working class.

The working class give assent to the social system which vests ownership of the shop in the employer. Hand in hand with that investiture goes the right of the boss to work the shop when it suits him, or shut down when it pleases him. His power of ownership determines his “right to run his business as he pleases.”

The very men who gave assent to the “right” of the boss next demand, for themselves, the right to determine the shop legislation, and the state also steps in and takes a hand in it. But the only effect of it all is that the ownership of the shop by the boss defeats “humanity,” unionism, and legislation. “We pay your wages—take our conditions or get out,” is the only result.

On the other hand the workers, who are slaves in the shop, have the ballot, and so overwhelming are they in numbers that they could elect practically every public official, but due to their economic dependence, and due to their ignorance of social

science, they vote for the “full dinner pail,” which, translated into plain English, means that the bosses say to them, “We pay your wages—vote as we want.”

In order to make their position good the workers must join together for the overthrow of the economic basis of modern production. They must join together, in the shop to oust the boss, and on the political field to break his power there. They must proceed along the line of adapting the industrial institutions of economic slavery to the political institutions of freedom by placing the machinery of production in the hands of the workers.

That is just what the capitalists are doing in the opposite direction: striving to adapt the political institutions of freedom to the economic ones of wage slavery. They are now the champions of judge-made law, their next step will be to abolish the suffrage and hold the workers in political slavery to match the industrial servitude.

There is no use in the workers whining over Goff decisions. The thing for them to do is organize class consciously along the lines of industrial unionism on the economic field, and with the Socialist Labor Party on the political field, and thus bring into harmony the nation’s industrial and political institutions.

Unless they do this, they will go on sinking lower and lower, until their condition will be that of such mental and physical incompetence that absolute slavery will result.

There is but one issue before the working class: It is none other than absolute Freedom or absolute Slavery.

It is for the workers to say which shall be.

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