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THE STRIKERS' MANIFESTO

By Daniel De Leon

Out of the chaos brought on in Allegheny County, Pa., by the clash between Capital and Labor, a voice has gone up, as out of a wilderness, that holds out the promise of progressive evolution and is an earnest of the emancipation of the proletariat.

It was the strikers' manifesto.¹

Until then only stubborn, even heroic, resistance had been shown by them to the power that exploited and would further degrade them. But such resistance might, unless lighted by intelligence, have ultimately taken the shape of Samson's deed of despair in the temple of the Philistines. The oppressors might have been annihilated, but civilization would have gone down in the crash.

This apprehension is now removed. The strikers' manifesto sounds the key-note of the situation.

The power of concentrated capital, it declares, is one, {"which, though expressed in terms of current speech as 'the right of employers to manage their business to suit themselves,' is coming to mean in effect nothing less than a right to manage the country to suit themselves"}; it asserts the {"equitable rights and interests"}, both of the public and the workmen, in the mills; and it announces the determination of the strikers to prosecute these interests {"in the courts of law"}.

The sticky slough of "pure and simple" trade unionism is cast off; Labor rises to a conception of its dignity and its duty to society; and it takes a long, firm step towards the scientific position that it is the sole producer of all wealth, alone entitled to its benefits, while the capitalist is an idle, useless sponger.

The movement is now switched aright. Not all the flutterings of capitalist owls can turn it awry; nor can the guffaw of capitalist flunkeys, at the thought of the working people appealing to the courts, deter it.

¹ See below.

The track now leads straight to the conquest of the State, and with the aid of the powers of the State—Executive, Legislative and Judicial—, to award to the public and the toilers the equities that are theirs in the wealth they have produced; to put an end to the competitive and monopolistic system of capital; and to eradicate the inhuman system of wage-slavery.

The “issues” of Capital in the pending presidential campaign are brushed aside. Socialism has become the issue, and, despite all noise to the contrary, will remain. American labor is impregnated with the spirit of the age.

The future is now assured. Civilization will not go down in the crash that is now imminent. Out of the crisis the proletariat will emerge victorious, and fulfil its historic mission.

Class rule will be at end; the Co-operative Commonwealth will be founded.



THE STRIKERS' MANIFESTO

A DECISIVE STEP TOWARDS SOCIALISM.

The manifesto of the Homestead strikers is a document of great historic importance. It shows positive progress towards Socialism. It was published on the 22d instant, and is as follows:

“The most evident characteristic of our time and country is the phenomenon of industrial centralization, which is putting the control of each of our great national industries into the hands of one or a few men, and giving these men an enormous despotic power over the lives and the fortunes of their employes and subordinates—the great mass of the people; a power which eviscerates our National constitution and our common law and directly antagonizes the spirit of universal history in its world-wide struggle after lawful liberty; a power which, though expressed in terms of current speech as ‘the right of employers to manage their business to suit themselves,’ is coming to mean in effect nothing less than a right to manage the country to suit themselves.

“The employes in the mill of Messrs. Carnegie, Phipps & Co., at Homestead, Pa., have built the town with its homes, its schools and its churches; have for many years been faithful co-workers with the company in the business of the mill; have invested thousands of dollars of their savings in said mill in the expectation

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of spending their lives in Homestead, and of working in the mill during the period of their efficiency. In addition to the ordinary gifts and advantages of our Government, the National Legislature has seen fit to specially foster and protect, by public taxation, the industry of their mills, and the State of Pennsylvania is to-day guarding it at great and extraordinary expense.

“Therefore, the committee desires to express to the public as its firm belief that both the public and the employes aforesaid have equitable rights and interests in the said mill which cannot be modified or diverted without due process of law, that the employes have the right to continuous employment in the said mill during efficiency and good behavior, without regard to religious, political or economic opinions, and association; that it is against public policy and subversive of the fundamental principles of American liberty that a whole community of workers should be denied employment or suffer any other social detriment on account of membership in a church, a political party or a trades union; that it is our duty as American citizens to resist by every legal and ordinary means the unconstitutional, anarchic and revolutionary policy of the Carnegie Company, which seems to evince a contempt of public and private interests and a disdain of the public conscience by its refusal to submit to lawful arbitration and by the lawless importation of a band of armed mercenaries to forcibly deprive the employes of their equitable rights in advance of any legal adjudication thereupon, and without previous appeal to the lawful forces of Alleghany county and the State of Pennsylvania.

“The committee wishes it known that we will prosecute the said public and private interests in the courts of law and equity and that we demand of Congress and the State Legislature distinct assertion of the principle that the public has an interest in such concerns as that at Homestead, and that the State has a duty to judge the affairs of such concerns when occasion may require.

“Finally, we desire to state emphatically that as defenders of the petitioners for law and order, we pledge ourselves to refrain from violence and lawlessness, and that we rest our cause, which is the people’s cause, the cause of American liberty, against Anarchy on one hand and despotism on the other, with the courts, the Legislatures and the public conscience.”

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