

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 9, NO. 306.

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, MAY 2, 1909.

TWO CENTS.

EDITORIAL

THE GLEDHILL-FOLEY BILL.

By DANIEL DE LEON

IT is to be hoped that the women teachers of Greater New York, who are battling for the elemental right of equal pay with their fellow male professionals, have put on, and will keep on, the thinking cap, which their suffragist sisters are claiming is a special headgear of their sex.

Teaching is a hard occupation. It is rendered doubly hard by the niggardliness of the ruling class, which, ever intent upon paying out in the shape of taxes the least possible amount of the wealth they plunder from the proletariat, begrudges every penny it can for schools. The small appropriations made for schools—small considering the number of children to be schooled, and decreasingly small, considering the increasingly large number of children of school age—causes a congestion of children in the available school space. Apart from the injury to the pupils subjected to such “wholesale tuition,” the strain upon the teacher, male or female, is inhuman. Considering that the congestion is severest in the primary and lower grades, where women teachers are found almost exclusively, the inhuman strain falls heaviest upon the shoulders of these. The least they are entitled to is as much pay for work that is at least as hard as the work of the male teachers.

Bent under the physical burden of small, and tortured by the moral sting of unequal pay, the women teachers have organized to remove at least the latter affliction. They have been making experience ever since.

Their first onslaught wrung from the Legislature a desired bill. The Governor vetoed it. His reasons were unique. He, one of those who advise Socialists to try and get one thing at a time, and who condemn Socialists for the “revolutionary posture of demanding the whole hog,”—he, raising a pietistic eye to “Equity,” vetoed the bill on the ground that it would be “unjust to equalize the salaries of one set of women in the civil service without equalizing it at the same time in all the other civil

service departments.” The doughty defender of Equity forgot all about his “one thing at a time” preachments to Socialists.

The women were not disheartened, though disappointed. Their second effort matured this year in the Gledhill-Foley Bill, passed by the Senate and sent to the Assembly, where it died with the adjournment of the Legislature.

The women teachers have crossed the threshold of a hall, the threshold of which the proletariat of other departments of human toil have crossed long ago—the Hall of Experience where they are all to learn, first of all, that they are proletarians; next, that the Government consists, not of their class, but of the class that exploits them; hence, that their salvation lies, not in begging favors from their masters, but in organizing with their whole class for the overthrow of the capitalist class.

Labor bills have passed Senates, to be defeated in Assemblies; they have passed Assemblies, to be defeated in Senates; they have passed both Senates and Assemblies, to be vetoed by Governors; and they have passed Senates and Assemblies and been signed by Governors, to be pronounced unconstitutional by the Courts.

The Gledhill-Foley Bill is primary lesson No. 2 for the women teachers. If these women’s thinking caps are in working order, the women teachers should be able to skip many a grade and graduate speedily in{to} the camp of the Socialist-Labor Movement.

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

Uploaded August 2010

slpns@slp.org