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EDITORIAL

“RECOGNITION.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

BY taking the stand that they did in the matter of the recognition of their Union by the manufacturers against whom they were and are on strike, the I.W.W. silk weavers of Paterson, N.J., have made history.

“Recognition of the Union by the employer!”—lo, an old time slogan of A.F. of L. and kindred “Unionisms.” It is a slogan that sounds plausibly bold, plausibly in favor of the workers, plausibly sound in Labor tactics, yet in fact, it is a slogan under which actual defeat has been covered, under which future defeats were insured, under which the sell-out of the Labor Leader was promoted, and under which the enslavement of the workers could be carried on unperceived.

An instance, taken piping hot from the oven of the American Labor Movement, will illustrate the point.

Just about a year ago there was a big cloakmakers’ strike in this city. For a while the struggle raged with unusual fury. Finally a Board of Arbitration was elected by the contending parties—workers and manufacturers,—and the strike was settled. The Protocol, drawn up by the arbitrators as the seal of settlement, contains these closing words:

“In conclusion, we wish to express our gratification at the fair and harmonious relations between the parties to the Protocol, and our conviction that eventually the arrangements between employers and employes as embodied in the Protocol will develop into a lasting and permanent adjustment of the relations between the employers and employes of the cloak manufacturing industry, and will serve as a model for many similar industries.”

Here we have “recognition” self-pilloried. “Recognized” by the employer, the Union is made, by its representative, Mr. Morris Hillquit, to surrender unconditionally the cause of Labor. The irrepressible conflict between Master Class and Wage Slave

is denied by the clause that expresses the hope of “a lasting and permanent adjustment of the relations between” the two. As a consequence, the Protocol has been of benefit only to the employer and the leaders through whom he dominates the Union. He is violating the Protocol at all turns, while the rank and file can hardly make a turn in the shop but the same is pronounced “a violation of the Protocol.” It is so in all instances. The price that the Union pays for “recognition” is to be sold out.

The Paterson I.W.W. silk weavers on strike were equal to the occasion—and to the experience. Foaming at the mouth, the manufacturers, one after another, surrendered to the scale demanded by their employes, but refused to sign under the seal of the I.W.W. This was, in fact, a double recognition of the I.W.W.—first, the recognition of the I.W.W. demands, by surrendering to them; second, the recognition of the I.W.W. organization by playing the ostrich act.

The Paterson I.W.W. weavers, enlightened by experience, avoided nailing themselves to an empty form. Their leaders, not anxious for fraternal junkets with the employer, did not sacrifice the interests of the rank and file to a shadow. For all practical purposes the manufacturers did recognize the I.W.W. Not from manufacturers but from the Working Class does the I.W.W. sue for recognition. They decided to ignore the manufacturers’ refusal to recognize the I.W.W.

The Paterson I.W.W. weavers planted themselves by their decision upon ground on which a victory can not be turned into a defeat; upon ground that protects them against A.F. of L.-ic sell-outs; upon ground on which no future shackles, except such as their own negligence may forge, can be forged against them.

The sun insists not upon formal recognition. It enforces the same de facto. The declaration of the I.W.W. weavers on strike, made at their monster meeting of the second of this month, is a new note in the Labor Movement of the land, uttered deliberately, free from the luridness of Anarchy. It is a notification that the I.W.W. places its dependence, not upon the smiles of the Master, places its dependence solely upon the Working Class.

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