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EDITORIAL

A RUSSIAN MARTYR.

By DANIEL DE LEON

WHAT is called the “Sam Parks Case” is not one but many cases; it is a whole episode. But an episode in what? In the Labor Movement? In the Capitalist Movement? Let’s see.

The work done by the housesmiths and bridgemen received quite a boom about six years ago. Simultaneously with that period, Samuel J. Parks arrived here from Chicago. Whether or not he was fetched by the Fuller Construction Company to engineer strikes against its competitors does not alter the case. As far as that industry was concerned, the field presented the aspect of a Western settlement in its early days, struggling for order. As in such settlements pistols and other weapons are the order of the day, so in this instance. The competing capitalist concerns held pistols at one another’s heads. The opportunity was golden for the nerveful rowdy. It was Parks’ opportunity. No better and no worse than the rioting capitalists in his trade, Parks decided to and did join the free fight. He differed from the competing “building” capitalists in that they had capital and he had none. He made up for that by his “labor” rank; like the “plebs leader” of old Rome, that was his capital. He “organized” the men. Some he “argued” into his body, others he knocked down into membership. On one occasion as many as seventeen dissenters were thrown down stairs by him with broken heads. He could not compete with the other concerns without an organization, so he forced one into existence, and he could not keep one into {in?} existence, without he showed them some advantage gained. Accordingly, he wielded the body, about 5,000 strong, in such way that their wages rose from \$2 to \$4 and even \$5. With a body held together by such tangible benefits he fought his own battle. Pistols being the vogue, and the capitalists pistoling one another, he pistoled all he could and lived in luxury.

Obviously this is no episode in the Labor Movement. It is a page of capitalist

development. No more than the Depews, who claim to be “workingmen,” can the Parkses be claimed as such. Neither seeks the emancipation of Labor; neither seeks the improvement of the condition of Labor except in so far as such improvement may promote his own interests; neither could get along without a wage slave class; neither seeks to abolish that class or imagines its abolition possible.

Many a workingman feels kind towards Parks to-day. In so far as they do, the episode has been lost upon them. To feel kind towards Parks is to accept capitalism as a finality. The point may be difficult to see. It is difficult to see. And for that very reason it must be emphasized. Upon that point turns the issue between bona fide Unionism—a necessary step towards progress—, and mala fide Unionism—a bulwark against Socialism. Between an Employers’ Association and a Parks’ Union, between a workingmen Depew and a workingmen Park’s, there is no difference.

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