

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 4, NO. 243.

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 1904.

TWO CENTS.

EDITORIAL

THE FAR EAST AND OTHER WARS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

FOR some weeks now attention has been riveted on the war in the Far East. And well it may. That war is a war for the foreign markets on which capitalist nations depend. Without those foreign markets there would be such an excess of manufactured articles as to swamp the structure of capitalism in all the fully developed societies {of} to-day. Hence the feverish anxiety attending the manoeuvres, battles, victories and defeats in the Russo-Japanese war. But there is another war that is also engaging attention. It is connected with the Far East war, in that it forces the struggle for foreign markets. This war is not of the last few weeks, but of the last few decades. It is a war that is not of nations, but of classes—the war between capital and labor—between the exploiters and the exploited.

This war of the classes—of the capitalist vs. the workers—is growing in intensity with each succeeding year. It is fought in the shop, the mine, on the street, in the club, the police station, the courts, the halls of legislation, and the executive chambers. The clergy preach, and the press lies, about it. It is everywhere; including in its combatants all grades of the classes involved, not even omitting children. The conditions from which this class war arises, the hostility which it produces and the results it achieves, either for or against the interests involved, have caused the questions growing out of it to become the paramount questions of modern American society. A review of the events of the week beginning with Washington's birthday, will make these statements clear.

The first event of importance is the convention of the Manufacturers' Association at Indianapolis, Ind., on Washington's Birthday. This convention, representing 5,000 manufacturers, headed by David M. Parry, cheered speeches favoring the forcible repression of strikes, and declared for the absolute dominance

of the employing class. This convention emphasized the lines of cleavage between the capitalist and the working classes in no uncertain manner.

The second event is the fight before the Congressional committee on the bill making eight hours the limit of the working day on Government contracts. This bill is meeting with the vigorous opposition of the representatives of the manufacturing interests involved.

The third event is of the same nature as the second. It concerns the hearing on the anti-injunction bill, a measure that would exempt labor organizations from being enjoined from striking on the grounds of conspiracy. The same interests are here again lined up in opposition.

The fourth event is comprised in the series of preparations attending the approaching mine workers' convention at Indianapolis, Ind. This convention will, in all probability, declare for a strike against a 15 per cent. wage reduction. Should a strike be declared its scene of action will embrace four of the leading States of the middle West. Its actors will include the executive, judicial and military officers of the territory involved, together with the soft coal operators, on one hand, and hundreds of thousands of miners, and their wives and children, on the other.

The fifth event deals with the prospective strike of 25,000 men in Chicago next month. This strike, which seems to be a certainty, will be an extension of the industrial troubles now existing in the metropolis of the West.

These five events, each of which reflects within its brief recital, turbulent and antagonistic conditions destructive of both peace and life alike, are the most conspicuous ones in the class war now raging. There are hundreds of others on a smaller scale, but no less significant, like the strike of the 150 unorganized men at Parry's establishment, for instance; a strike which shows that the conflict between capital and labor is not a matter of tyrannical unionism, as Parry contends; or like the imprisonment of the five officers and members of the Franklin Pressmen's Union of Chicago for violating a picketing injunction, a step which illustrates the desperate straits to which labor is reduced in the class struggle—there are hundreds of other events, we repeat, but these five leading ones will suffice to demonstrate that the war at home is being pursued as relentlessly as the war in the Far East.

Though the war in the Far East is an important one, it should not be permitted to absorb working class attention. Foreign wars and class wars both spring from the capitalist exploitation of labor. The capitalists rob labor in the shop of the difference between its wages and the value of its product. This renders labor unable to buy back what it has produced. This creates “over-production,” which makes foreign markets and wars inevitable. It, at the same time, creates a struggle between capital and labor, each of which strives for ever greater profits, or ever increasing wages. It follows that since both foreign wars and class wars both spring from the capitalist exploitation of labor, the only remedy is to end that exploitation. With this gone, the Far East and other wars will also be gone. To the ending of the capitalist exploitation of labor, then, should the working class confine the greater part of its attention. The condition of the times, at home and abroad, demands it.

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

Uploaded April 2007

slpns@igc.org