

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 1, NO. 152.

NEW YORK, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 1900.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

FOR ALL OF WHICH WE ARE THANKFUL.

By DANIEL DE LEON

The leading feature of Thanksgiving, and in fact of all holidays, is that the thing for which it has been instituted is forgotten, and nothing but its commercial aspect is left. The mere fact that the President, and the Governors of the States issue proclamations does not at all nullify the true conditions of affairs. The only one to whom Thanksgiving is sacred is the merchant who profits by it. Even the churches have been rudely thrust aside, and the place of the preacher has been taken by the turkey butcher. He reigns supreme, and his right to reign can be disputed by none.

Such an idea as rendering thanks never enters the minds of the people, above all the minds of the wage-workers. There are many and grievous calamities from which they should be thankful of being delivered, but the trouble is that they have not been delivered, and so they send up no glad hymns of rejoicing. There are grievances, wrongs, extortions, and burdens enough, but they have not been removed, but on the contrary, they have become more onerous. They have become more unbearable. They have approached nearer to the point where the working class itself must arise and shake them off. After such an action there would be cause for thanksgiving, and there can be none until it is accomplished.

This present day, following upon the most decisive victory the capitalist class, as organized in the Republican party, has ever won, finds the wage workers in a more precarious and more perilous position than they were one year ago. Shall they be thankful accordingly? Every indication points to the coming of great and widespread labor troubles. In every industry they are inevitable, unless there has, a short time before, been trouble in which the employees were thoroughly subdued, and rendered incapable of striking another blow for some time to come.

The miners of Pennsylvania, the miners who struck against the most degrading exactions, and who succeeded in forcing some amelioration of the existing conditions, have little cause for thanksgiving when they reflect upon the fact that

their strike brought but little good to them, and gave to the employer an excuse to raise the price of coal to such an extent that the computed profits will amount to over \$27,000,000 a year. The whole working class is concerned in the same raise in prices, and it affects every member of the working class. Even the most commonly used weapon, the strike, has become in the hands of the capitalist a machine whereby the wage workers are still further reduced.

The cotton operatives in the South have been forced to abandon their union, and to submit to the terms their employers may see fit to introduce. The South is the coming cotton mill section of the country, and what happens there will be reflected in the New England towns that once held proud and undisputed possession of the industry in this country. The wages in the South are such that the operatives cannot live like civilized men, but are forced to herd together like beasts. Yet, there is a superfluity of workers. The New England men find that the material condition of their fellow workers in the South is the standard toward which they tend. When it is reached, and not until it is reached, can they compete successfully with the Southern mills. The employment of children for an unlimited number of hours a day gives still cheaper help, and the Northern worker must send his children into the mills at an earlier age, and for a longer number of hours, or else the manufacturing will go where all these things are obtainable. Neither the Southerner nor the Northerner has improved his economic condition. Shall they be thankful that they have not?

In Chicago the forcing of large numbers of men out of useful employment, and the impossibility of finding work, have turned the city into a center for desperate men, who know no law but the law of self preservation. Denied by society a chance to earn a living they still must live, and they prey upon the very society that has so wronged them. In the series of strikes which have occurred during the past four months there have been several fatal collisions between the strikers on one side and scabs on the other. According to the press reports the strikers were always the "aggressors." Is it not strange that almost invariably the men should be the victims of attacks on others? Yet it is so. There have been numberless other conflicts in the same city in which the strikers also were beaten: and here also they are named as the assailers. That conflict, that strike, that open warfare has its silent side in which there are hunger, misery, want, destitution, and death. It has its result in the increase of robberies and murders. And every crime that is committed can be traced to the condition of the working class. Shall they be thankful that they are cornered,

and, like every cornered animal, must fight?

The cigarmakers in New York after a desperate fight of several months' duration, have been beaten, and have had their union brought to the verge of ruin. They fought not alone the manufacturer, but they also had against them, as the most venomous enemy, the men—the Organized Scabbery of the labor leaders—within their own ranks. They go back whipped and disrupted, and the manufacturer can do with them as he likes. Shall they be thankful for what they received?

Go where you will, turn where you may, the working class is confronted by the same condition of affairs. The same administration which calls for a day of thanksgiving is one that has conducted our colonial policy. If we had foreign markets the mills and the factories would open. We have those markets, and there are still millions of unemployed. There will and must be those millions while the present system lasts.

The working class can have its Thanksgiving Day, but they must first make it. They can make it by taking into their own hands the powers of government, and using them for the benefit of the whole people. They can have something to be thankful for by joining their force with the Socialist Labor Party, and by assisting in the work that the Party is carrying on. The Thanksgiving Day of the working class is yet to come, but come it must, and come it will because the injustice of the capitalist system weakens it, and the growing strength of Socialism will destroy it. When it is destroyed, then a proclamation can be issued that means something. It will mean that men have decided to be free, and that they have decided to have and hold all that is rightfully theirs.

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

Uploaded October 2005