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EDITORIAL

“AS WASTE PAPER.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

AMONG the many excellencies of the recent British strike is one the echoes of which have just begun to float over to this side—that the men struck in “violation of their sacred contract!”

Still rubbing its shins in pain and anger, the *London Tablet* emits a particularly delicious moan over the horror of the “calamity.” In the year 1907, it says, the congratulations of grateful people were freely tendered to Chancellor Lloyd-George because by a “great act of democratic statesmanship he had made a general railway strike forever impossible.” The Conciliation Boards were to do the trick. A “solemn compact” was entered into. The companies admittedly “failed to observe the spirit and letter of the agreement.” Here was just where the “arbitration clauses ought now to come in force”—of course there was nothing to arbitrate as long as the company gave no offense. But no! The rascally unions, inspired by the “contagious example of the success” of the dock strikers, “thrust aside” the “labor leaders” who sought to hold them in leash; their agreement, which had “still more than three years to run” was “treated as waste paper”; and “the men who were pledged not to strike before November, 1914, decided to strike in a body at twenty-four hours’ notice.”

Horror of horrors!

No dentist loves to inflict pain. In certain cases, though, the involuntary wince of the patient is the safest guide as to the proper progress of the operation. Such is the nature of the cry of pain wrung from the breast of the *Tablet*.

A working class so blind and dumb as to allow itself to be held to starvation’s edge by a “solemn compact” forced upon them by that very starvation itself, is in a bad state. A working class so innocent and fiberless as to let itself be held back from the good it might gain, by a parcel of “labor leaders” selected by the bosses for just

that purpose, almost deserves the misery that it gets. Over both of these a ruling class can slumber in sweet security.

But a working class that knows enough to strike in mass; a proletariat that brushes aside like flies its false leaders; best of all an army of industrial slaves that breaks through and treats “as waste paper” the fraudulent contracts clapped upon their ankles like fetters to hold them to their slavery—for such a working class the future is red with hope.

The example of the British workers must become contagious. Let there be more “waste paper,” all along the line.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
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slpns@slp.org