

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 3, NO. 331.

NEW YORK, WEDNESDAY, MAY 27, 1903.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

WANAMAKERING OVER AGAIN.

By DANIEL DE LEON

WHAT is going on in Bridgeport just now has all the flavor of an event that took place in Philadelphia in the spring of 1896.

In Philadelphia, the trolley employees made that year a stand for better conditions. It was one of those moves of the Blind Samson, Labor. Of course, it was entitled to better conditions. It, the operator, of the trolley lines, was producing the wealth on which the Weidner Syndicate was luxuriating in idleness. Labor is entitled to all it produces, and the trollymen were being plundered of the bulk of the fruit of their labor. Philadelphia trolley Labor did not, probably even now does not, realize that to ask a little when you are entitled to the whole, is an act that justifies the principle of capitalist plunder; and that, accordingly, it was an act bound to fail. Proceeding from such false premises, Philadelphia trolley Labor failed to move in the only direction that leads to victory,—the direction of ousting the capitalist class and the capitalist system at the polls. The false attitude thus struck lay Philadelphia trolley Labor open to the illusions that finally brought its demands for better conditions to speedy grief.

In the first place, Philadelphia trolley Labor resorted to petty violence. Brickbats were resorted to. He who thinks the hour for physical force has sounded never will fight bullets with brickbats. The result of the blunder was that the brickbatters were promptly arrested. All the same, they imagined they had accomplished something; the public stopped patronizing the cars. It is a feature of brickbats that where one has flown, others may follow. The consequence was that the public, shoppers in particular, became wary, not caring to go deliberately where brickbats might be flying. And the circumstance gave great joy to the Blind Samson. But he was blind. The identical blindness that had so far led him astray, prevented him from SEEING.

The timidity of shoppers told hard on the stores. It told hard on John Wanamaker.

He met with others, and was appointed “peacemaker.” What HE was after was to restore the confidence of the shoppers. The Blind Samson did not see that. It accepted the “peacemaker.” It returned to work “pending arbitration.” The strike was declared off. The shoppers got out of their shells and into Wanamaker’s shop. And the men were beaten.

Such was the course of events in Philadelphia.

Such it is, up to the last point in Bridgeport. And that last point is now about to be reached there, too.

Bridgeport trolley Labor went on strike as blindly as did Philadelphia’s. Brickbats flew. The brickbatters were arrested. But all the same shoppers have become scared. Business men of Bridgeport are now putting their heads together; people of the adjacent towns are not coming in to buy; they fear a stray brickbat. The next thing will be the appointment of a “peacemaker” by the anxious shopkeepers. Already the thing is under discussion. And when it shall have matured, the same blindness that caused the Blind Samson of Bridgeport Labor to strike for “better conditions,” while it votes for worse conditions, will cause it to be taken in by the “peacemaker.”

We are about to see Wanamaking in Bridgeport.

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

Uploaded December 2006