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EDITORIAL

STONE-BLIND OF ONE EYE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

MR. George J. Bohnen of the Brotherhood of Carpenters is engaged in a debate that is now in progress in the *Record and Guide* and which has for its purpose, on his part, to show that the arbitration agreement between the employers and the employes in the building trades is a sham, a snare and a delusion—in so far as the employes are concerned.

Mr. Bohnen suggests the following analogy to prove his conclusion: “Suppose that Russia should overwhelmingly defeat Japan in the present war. As one of the terms of peace it might oblige Japan to sign an arbitration treaty, framed entirely by the Czar’s commissioners. Then Russia might establish its arbitration tribunal at St. Petersburg, appoint its chief officers without consulting Japan, and pay them out of its own exchequer. This arrangement would hardly be hailed by peace congresses as a notable contribution to the cause of international arbitration. It is precisely this which the Employers’ Association has done. Its failure, therefore, was inevitable. An arbitration agreement forced upon the arbitrators is a contradiction in terms; the spirit of conciliation is absolutely essential.”

The analogy is excellent. The building trades had been weakened by a prolonged lockout. Thereupon the so-called arbitration agreement was forced upon them by the victors, and the office of the arbitration secretary was set up at the Employers’ Club. So far Mr. Bohnen’s optics seem to be A. No.1. But he does not stop there. He proceeds to say that in order to have a fair arbitration agreement, a parliament of workingmen and employers must be held who shall jointly draw up a new treaty. In other words, Mr. Bohnen is stone-blind of one eye.

The “arbitration” that Mr. Bohnen supposes between Japan and Russia he shows to be a sham. It is a sham because one of the parties was beaten, and consequently the “arbitration” could only be one-sided, a decree of the vanquisher

against the hopelessly vanquished. And what is the plight of Labor? It is the plight of the HOPELESSLY VANQUISHED. To say employer and employe, capitalist and workingman, is to say vanquisher and hopelessly vanquished on the economic field of battle. Lockouts and lost strikes that crush the workingmen are but “rubbings-in” of the status of “hopelessly vanquished”: they are but underscorings of the fact that the working class is a subject class, the capitalist class a master class. For the same reason that the supposed arbitration between Russia and Japan would be a sham, all arbitrations between Capital and Labor are shams, and can be nothing but shams. Where there is the capitalist there is the victorious tyrant; where there is the working class there is the beaten down wage slave. “Working class” means that. There is nothing to arbitrate between the two. One or the other must down. That’s the only solution,—all of which Mr. Bohnen’s pure and simple training prevents him from seeing. He actually imagines the Working Class stands at a par with the Capitalist Class and there is a fair arbitration possible between the two.

While Mr. Bohnen’s left eye is in perfect condition, he is stone-blind in the right one.

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

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