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NOTES ON NEWS.

If the non-Socialist middle-class sympathisers with the strikers could grasp one side of the situation, I think it ought to stagger their complacency with the present arrangement of society. Let us take their own view of that situation, which is pretty much this: A body of workmen very much oppressed by the operation of the wages and capital system have demanded a slight increase of wages, and a revision of an iniquitous system of sweating; the public generally have admitted the justice and moderation of the men's claim; but their employers have simply buttoned up their pockets and said "We can't and shan't," and the public have absolutely no means of compelling them to yield.

Could anything condemn our present society more clearly and completely than this deadlock? Here is the whole of humanity and morality crying out loudly on the shabby employers to give way to the men's demands, and the shabby employers in fact replying to that cry: Humanity and morality may go to H (eaven) for us; we have to create a dividend; we stand on our legal right to starve as many people as may be convenient to us. And the public morality and humanity is helpless before them; for their legal right is undoubted: their legal right to put citizens to death by starvation.

Yes, in spite of its prisons and ropes and hangmen for those whom it calls specially "criminals," the law is the Great Murderer!

Here, then, at last is the *reductio ad absurdum* of *laissez faire*; which of course means, let the privileged alone to make the most of their privilege of driving the weakest to the wall. For clearly if you attack privilege you at once abjure *laissez faire*; you are not letting alone, you are becoming revolutionary.

Once more, we must not suppose, however, that this sympathy of the well-to-do for the strikers is universal; I believe that if you polled the well-to-do generally they would give you a handsome majority for Norwood. The *Daily News* the other day gave a specimen of a conversation with a man of business, who proposed to remedy the strike by locking up four of the ringleaders, and taking advantage of the rioting, which would be sure to follow, for putting down the whole agitation by means of a little murder in the streets.

I really believe that this conversation was genuine; for, happening to be in a Conservative club last week (I don't habitually frequent such places), I listened with much amusement to the "natives" (I must say, a rather gruesome-looking set of savages) putting the other view to that which has been generally put in the papers; and, as a matter of course, it was all on the lines of the *Daily News'* interlocutor; and Burns (I am happy to say) was by no means flattered by these worthies, a long term of imprisonment being the best wish for him. It is true that some pity was expressed for the "poor men" for their ill-luck in being led astray by such scoundrels, and their ruin (the deprivation of 6s. a-week) abundantly prophesied.

This may seem a kind of a joke to us: but do not let us forget that the theories of these ruffians would have been put into practice if they could have been. These strikes are not less dangerous to the supremacy of the landlords and their abettors than the Trafalgar Square incidents, but more dangerous. There is only one reason why Burns is not going to Pentonville this time, and why the streets are not cleared by the bludgeon, and if necessary by the bayonet, and that is because the rulers of this happy land are afraid to do it. The men are too many and too desperate, and their miserable condition has really impressed itself on a large part of the non-political middle classes; and lastly and above all, their brother-workers are really in active sympathy with the strikers.

The rejection by the men of the so-called compromise on Monday was a certain thing, for less than this they cannot get. The promise

of the extra penny at some future date is seen by everybody to be a delusion; as who can say what may happen between now and then to serve the directors as an excuse for breaking their promise? they have shown themselves very fond of using the well-known formula of moneyed men, "We cannot," and will not be slow to do so in the future we may be sure.

It has seemed as though the provinces have not shown that enthusiasm for the strikes, or that understanding of them, that might have been expected; but, at least, the conduct of the 15 Dundee labourers who set out to tramp back when they found that they would interfere with the strike here, is a bright spot in the dullness. All honour to the brave men! As to the conduct of Mr. Christopher Peacock, it was what might have been expected from a Nupkins. We can only be glad that the men met in the end with a little better reward of loyalty than seven day's hard, though that is a type of such rewards too. Let us echo the cheers of the Lincoln folk who saw them off to Dundee again.

This last Trades-Union Congress has turned out thoroughly reactionary, and there has been plenty of bowing down to Gessler Broadhurst's hat, both by the men and in the press. It is to be feared that the explanation of this is simply that the influential men in the respectable trades-unions are fossil Whigs, and of course need a fossil Whig for a leader (and have got him). This at first seems discouraging to those who have had any hope of socialising the trades-unions, and I don't know that the hope was ever worth much.

It must not be forgotten, however, that not only has revolt begun amongst the older trades-unions, but that what is now going on is a threat of their final disappearance into a far wider and more generous association of the workers, which will be inspired with socialistic feeling. The unions of so-called unskilled labourers, which are part of the consequences of the present strikes, very much reduce the importance of Mr. Broadhurst and his brother officials who pretend to represent the workers of the country. There is a curious analogy, ominous of good, between the position of these two groups and that of the struggle of the Trade Guilds of the Middle Ages against the exclusive and aristocratic Merchant Guilds. That struggle ended in victory for the true workmen, and it is hardly indulging in prophesy to say that a similar victory may be looked forward to once more. Mr. Broadhurst's triumph and the solidifying of the Whig element in the official trades-unions does nothing but widen the gap (always a pretty wide one) between him and the workmen of the country. W. M.

The great strike has taught us one lesson, that battles of labour are best fought in the street and not in the Parliamentary arena. In future, if the workers want anything they will come out on strike for it, and not elect a man to Parliament to do for them what they can do far better for themselves. The big strike will be an infallible method to bring the capitalist to his knees.

Especially is this true with regard to the eight hour working-day. I have my opinion with regard to this reform, which I do not consider worth the fuss which is made about it, but still, if it is to be gained, why should it not be won by a general strike among the workers who desire it?

I say this not because I consider the reform of much consequence, but because the strike would be such a valuable instruction to the workers of the way in which to get some things of far more consequence than an eight hour working-day, namely, the wealth which is theirs by right. They created it and they should have it.

It may be said that the trades-unions are only a small minority of the working-classes of this country. But are not trade-union men a small minority among the waterside workers who have fought so gallantly? Suppose the trades-unions are won over to the eight hour notion, and they certainly have shown signs of becoming favourable