EDITORIAL

NO SCAPE-GOATING!

By DANIEL DE LEON

“The blood of Paul Mendelsohn[^1] is not upon the head of his assassins only. The murder in Waterbury is but one of the fruits of the systematic coddling of lawlessness that began with the befriending of John Mitchell and his union in Pennsylvania throughout a series of murderous crimes that has no parallel.”—New York Sun.

Did the Waterbury tragedy and the alleged lawlessness in Pennsylvania “begin,” are they to be traced to the “befriending of John Mitchell and his union?”—Not unless the source of the Mississippi is to be placed at Baton Rouge.

Some three years ago a conflict arose between the Sun and the typographical union. The Sun published its statement. It is estopped from going back upon that. According thereto the conflict was not between it and its employees; it was not a conflict over wages. According thereto the conflict was with the leaders of the union, who, in the hire of the Mergenthaler linotype machine company, fought the Sun for introducing a rival and competing machine. The conflict raged violently: the strike turned into a boycott. The Sun secured injunctions against these leaders, and in its affidavits called them “bandits,” “criminals,” “outlaws,” etc., etc. Finally on March 10, 1902, peace was restored. How peace was restored between the Sun, on the one hand, and the “bandits,” “criminals,” and “outlaws,” on the other, the below passage from the Tammany Times of April 26, reproduced among the editorial paragraphs of Printers Ink of May 7, will give an idea:

“We understand that the ‘pool’ formed to buy the interests of Paul Dana in

[^1]: A Waterbury, Conn., policeman shot to death on March 8, 1903. See the Daily People news item on page 2.
the New York Sun raised one million dollars to complete the transaction. Of this $700,000 was to be paid to Paul Dana and the remaining $300,000 was to go to the Typographical Union for the purpose of bringing about the settlement of the Sun strike. The payment of that $300,000 was undoubtedly a legitimate business transaction, since the Union refused to settle unless allowed a liberal amount for the expenses of carrying on the war. But it would be interesting to know how much of the $300,000 ultimately found its way into the treasury of the Typographical Union in general and Big Six in particular, and how much stuck to the fingers of the middlemen in the form of commissions.”

In other words:

As is well known, the only point finally at issue between the Sun and the strike and boycott manipulators was the status of these same manipulators. There was, indeed, no question of wages; the question was whether the labor skates, who run the union, should preserve their powers, or allow their wings to be clipped. These wrapped themselves in the mantle of Labor, like the Plebs Leaders of old Rome, and fought, that is to say, heroically sacrificed the rank and file,—taxed them heavily (we think as high as $1 a week), and with the large funds thus collected lived in clover themselves, as Secret and Agitation Committeemen with “no questions asked,” and waged a war of boycott against the Sun,—and the Sun caved in: befriended them to the extent of $300,000! And this happened before John Mitchell began to be befriended!

St. Louis may not be the head springs of the Mississippi; but surely it is ahead of Baton Rouge. And in truth, not even the Sun is the starting point of the “coddling of
lawlessness,” or the “befriending of criminals.” Why did the Sun cave in, “coddle” and “befriend”? Did it wish to? It was forced. By whom, or what? It was forced by the loss of advertising patronage. Again, in other words:

The advertisers, capitalist concerns, like the Sun, were, some of them, intimidated by the boycotters: they feared they would lose customers, they feared loss of pence if they advertised in the Sun; others, knowing better, seized upon the boycott as a welcome pretext to escape the blackmail that is usually implied in the advertisements of capitalist papers. In short, these capitalist advertisers “coddled” and “befriended” the labor skates, before the Sun did. Net results, they dragged the Sun in their wake.

Enough has been here said to prove that the “coddling of unlawlessness” and the “befriending” of “criminals, outlaws and bandits” did not start with the capitalist concerns that “coddled” and “befriended” Mitchell. Enough has been said to show that the whole Capitalist Class is the fountain head of the evil,—now one set, then another, but in the long run the whole pack of mutually rending capitalist swine, to whom, alternately against one another, the labor skate is of use, flesh of whose labor-fleecing flesh, bone of whose labor-fleecing bone he is.

By all means, let not the blood of Paul Mendelsohn lie on the head of his physical assassins only. Let it also and especially lie where it morally belongs, on the head of the principal of the deed, the Capitalist Class, without whose “coddling” and “befriending” the labor skate could not exist a day; the Capitalist Class, of whom the Mitchells and the Waterbury assassins are but the agents,—agents who, the Capitalist Class being removed, could


do no more than Caesar’s arm,
When Caesar’s head is off.2

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2 [William Shakespeare, Julius Caesar]