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EDITORIAL

## THE “PITTSBURG THIRTY”; OR GUNS—LOADED AND UNLOADED.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**T**HE great Steel Strike bids fair to go down into history as the most fertile of any one incident in producing manifestations, that, provided they are taken to heart, cast innumerable sidelights on the possibilities of Labor economically organized.

On July 31, the stock of the United States Steel Corporation suddenly broke down several points; a day or two thereafter it steadied up again, and then gradually re-rose. The Steel Strike was on before, and during, and continued subsequent to the said break-down in the stock market. That strike could, accordingly, not have been the cause, although its existence had somewhat contributory force. What was the cause?

An employee named Patrick Frey, a rougher, at the Twenty-ninth street mill of the Carnegie Steel Company in Pittsburg—a mill not involved in the Steel Strike—, had been active in organizing the men in the mill, and when the officials discovered Frey’s work he was discharged. Immediately, thirty men out of about fifteen hundred employed by the mill, and whom Frey had just organized, quit work. This happened on the 30th; the tumble down in stocks followed the next day, swiftly upon the announcement of the occurrence; Frey was quickly reinstated, the thirty men returned to work, and the stock market recovered composure.

The capitalist social system is the first system builded on a carpeting of banana peels. The capitalist is the first social ruler, the law of whose existence is Insecurity. However centralized his economic power, it is riddled with economic blow-holes. This fact, when known and thoroughly grasped, can be turned into a loaded gun with which capitalist inroads upon the workers can be resisted, and with the aid of which even positive relief can be from time to time wrested from the exploiters; when, however, the fact is not known or its significance is not grasped, it turns to an unloaded gun, that, for a moment, may scare him whom it covers, but that, in the

long run, breeds contempt for its holder, and increased assurance against him. The pure and simple Union is such an unloaded gun; the class-conscious Union, to wit, the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance, is the loaded gun.

Here, on the one hand, the spectacle has been seen of thousands of men, frequently estimated at over 50,000, standing out for weeks in the Steel Strike; surely this is a gun of no contemptible calibre; but it is not loaded. Like birds of the field, who become familiar by experience with the scarecrow set up against them, and who finish by hopping gaily upon it, aye perching upon the very stick, stuck in the sawdust of its hands for a make-believe gun, and dropping their drippings upon it, so is the capitalist exploiter now seen dallying with the Union engaged in this Steel Strike, his Hannas fingering it confidently, and his Morgans standing up defiantly before its silent, harmless muzzle. On the other hand, a paltry thirty men have been seen on strike less than 24 hours against a giant body; within that time the exploiter’s pulse “rattled,” as indicated by the stock quotations; and the grievance complained of was redressed. This gun was loaded.

In what consisted the ball?—In a sense of solidarity. Left to itself, the Working Class’ instinct of its class bonds ever and anon kindles into life. The spirit that attends the birth and keeps up the life of the class-conscious Union, i.e., the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance, the class-bond of Labor against the class-bond of Capital—, attended the birth of the organization of these “Pittsburg Thirty,” as it ever attends and hovers over the cradle of most Trade Unions. In the instance of these “Thirty,” that spirit had not yet time either to be smothered by the weeds that grow from the absence of conscious sense of class, or to be perversely extinguished by the malevolent activity of the Labor Fakir, the Labor Lieutenant of the capitalist class; on the contrary, in the instance of the body held in hand by a Shaffer that spirit is held under, where it has not yet fled.

Keen is the capitalist’s instinct. It quickly scented danger in the gun held up to it by the “Pittsburg Thirty”; it smelled the ball: it had not yet time to extract the missile, and it ducked. From Shaffer’s gun of mightiest calibre, however, it scents no danger: it has long extracted the ball thereout: Labor Lieutenants, from Weihe and Garland down to the present Shaffer, have attended to this and made manifest the perfection of their work through their public political solidarity.

The pure and simple Union is a gun rendered harmless; the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance is the loaded gun, alone serviceable on the economic field of the Class Struggle.

**The “Pittsburg Thirty”; or Guns—Loaded and Unloaded *Daily People*, August 3, 1901**

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