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EDITORIAL

CAN IT BE?

By DANIEL DE LEON

BOTH from the camp of Labor and the camp of Capital considerable astonishment is being shown at the conduct of the “Law and Order” element round about Cripple Creek in deposing public officials. Marshals, sheriffs, justices of the peace, judges, even assistant district attorneys, as the latest despatches describe circumstantially, are given the option of resigning or hanging. Of course, they prefer resigning. These officials were all either elected or appointed in due form, in legal form. Neither the law nor the constitution of Colorado recognizes the form of “hang or resign” as a means of removal from office. Nevertheless the capitalist self-appointed “Law and Order” vigilantes have adopted the form. Probably the bizarreness of the idea of “Law and Order” being worshiped by such high-handed measures is the cause of the surprise that the measures arouse with the Republican and Democratic press; no doubt, on the other hand, the brutality of the measures is the cause of the indignation that they are causing in the camp of Labor. And yet, the question comes, Why surprise, why indignation?

Buffalo is not so far away from this city; nor is a certain occurrence that took place in Buffalo any many hundred years gone by.

It was in Buffalo, in the year of grace 1892, when the switchmen struck to enforce the 10-hour law that the railroad magnates were violating in defiance, not of the statute only, but of humanity. The strikers were succeeding. The railroad magnates needed quick and sharp action to break the morale of the strikers. George Gould went to the Sheriff and demanded of him that he apply to the Governor for militia. The Sheriff refused, saying there was no need of such a measure. The strikers were orderly, and he was quite able to keep order. Thereupon George Gould shook his fist under the nose of the Sheriff and threatened him with the loss of his office if he did not comply. The further events of that strike, which culminated with

the murder of a boy, Broderick, by the militia, and the loss of the strike need not here be rehearsed. The scene between the “Law and Order” George Gould and the Sheriff is all that is wanted now.

Was there any substantial difference between the conduct of George Gould in Buffalo in 1892 and that of the gentleman’s latter day Colorado doubles? Surely none! Law and Order were both defied, and they were defied, as in Colorado to-day, in the interest of crime, the crime of violating a law that was enacted in the interest of humanity. And yet, did either the capitalist class or Mr. Gompers of the A.F. of L. express any surprise or indignation thereat? Not in the least. The capitalist class said: “Bravo!”; and as to Mr. Gompers, in the very fall of that year he endorsed Mr. Jacob Cantor, a then candidate for the Senate in this State, and applauder of Gov. Flower, who obeyed the Goulds’ demand for soldiers,—endorsed him as “a friend of Labor”!

Can it be that Labor is shaking itself loose from the scabby mental claws of the Gomperses and that, as a result, the Republican-Democratic press feels skittish? If that is not the case, the present surprise and indignation are senseless.

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

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