

THE PEOPLE

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WORKINGMEN OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!

By Daniel De Leon

Two years ago this country, for the first time in its history, shipped iron to England. A few months later English steamships found it not only convenient but profitable to buy Virginia coal in New York for consumption on their return trip. From these two remarkable occurrences it seemed natural to infer that the time was past when the labor engaged on this side of the Atlantic in the production of iron and coal received any benefit whatever from the tariff duties said to have been imposed for its special protection. This inference became a certainty with the publication of Carroll D. Wright's report on the relative cost of producing coal and iron in this country and abroad; for it was then shown officially that our labor was actually cheaper than that of Great Britain. In other words, it was shown that while the prices established for domestic consumers by our coal barons and iron kings were protection prices, the wages of their "hands" were actually below the free trade level. Degraded labor—such is the work of capitalistic protection.

Now comes the news that the coal strike in England has fully opened the eyes of our coal barons to the advantages which they enjoy, and that steps are being taken to improve those advantages to the fullest possible extent. In this they are aided by the agents of great British manufacturers and transporters, one of whom—a certain Wm. Fenwick—has just come to this country with a view to the building up of a steady export trade in American coal. In the opinion of that man, "the damage now going on in some of the Durham pits through the accumulation of water and the falling in of the workings will be simply ruinous and many of the pits will never be reopened." The injury done to the ports of Tyne and Wear, and to the industries of the district, cannot, he says, be estimated, and "it will be long before the North country recovers from the effects of this blow."

If this statement be true it shows that the free trade capitalists of Great Britain, ever so boastful of their patriotism, would rather ruin an important district of their own country, and depend for coal on America, than pay the

few extra pence necessary to save their miners from starvation. Degraded labor—such is the work of capitalistic free trade.

We may now expect a large immigration of Durham miners; a circumstance that will be improved by our coal barons to further reduce the wages of American labor. And from our shores cheap coal will go to England, submissively mined on this continent by the very men who resisted oppression on the opposite shore.

Could such things be if Labor throughout the world, taught by the internationalism of capital, marched under the great banner on which is inscribed: “Workingmen of All Nations Unite!”

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