

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 3, NO. 97.

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, OCTOBER 5, 1902.

TWO CENTS.

EDITORIAL

THE HANNA-ROOSEVELT DUEL.

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WITH the nation as the stage, the silly portion of the public as the open-mouthed audience, and the suffering anthracite coal miners as the lurid Bengal fire, whose burning up throws a glamor on the scene, a personal political duel has been going on between Hanna and Roosevelt—Hanna to oust Roosevelt from the next Presidential race, Roosevelt to keep his seat. The latest incident in this duel was the late scene in Washington where Roosevelt frowningly appealed to the coal operators and the officers of the Union to settle the coal strike.

The anthracite coal strike was not Hanna's first move. Indeed, it was no move at all, or "thrust," on the part of Hanna in his duel with Roosevelt. The anthracite coal strike was merely a financial manoeuvre on Hanna's part. With anthracite far below the demand, a market would be opened for Hanna's bituminous coal. Good grounds for a strike are always on hand. The miserable wage, the still worse environments under which the miners work, are ample ground on which to strike, and strike hard. Both wage and environments are as bad in Hanna's as in Baer's mines. If resistance to such hard conditions should justify a strike at one mine, it certainly should justify similar proceedings at all others. But that, of course, would not have suited the Hanna plan. To profit by a strike in the anthracite region, the bituminous regions must go on producing. Accordingly, Hanna's lieutenant on the Civic Federation, John Mitchell, saw to it at the recent Indianapolis convention of the miners that the strike should not extend to the bituminous fields. The plan succeeded. Aided by the Hanna coal operators, who check off the strike assessment of their miners, the anthracite miners have held out, and bituminous coal tripled in price. While Hanna's financial manoeuvre was being executed with typical capitalist ruthlessness and the typical capitalist false pretences of love and affection for the workingmen, his political duel was going on, with varying success, but,

must be admitted, with the scores in his favor, on the whole. On the whole, Hanna was crowding Roosevelt into a hole. In the course of this duel, either of them, or both, seized upon the coal strike situation. Whichever of the two started the move, Hanna comes out ahead by a large majority—and the ill-starred miners have to pay the piper.

If, the coal operators having accepted the terms of Hanna's labor lieutenant, Mitchell, Roosevelt had appointed an arbitral committee, he would have been stuck, whatever the decision:

—if the decision was in favor of the miners, Roosevelt would never receive the nomination for President. A decision that could not but fly in the teeth of all the principles of capitalism would effectively array against Roosevelt all the capitalist forces that dominate Republican conventions;

—if the decision was in favor of the operators, Roosevelt's presidential boom would be equally shattered: Hanna would see to it that his labor lieutenants would raise the hue and cry against "a man so utterly oblivious of the rights of Labor that he appointed a committee hostile to the workingmen." A persistent and plausible cry about "organized labor's" hostility rarely fails of its effect with politicians.

On the other hand, if the coal operators declined the terms of Hanna's labor lieutenant Mitchell, Roosevelt would be stuck from another quarter. Whether he backs down or not, whether he convenes Congress or not, and whatever, if convened, Congress may do, Roosevelt is in hot water: he either renders himself still more ridiculous than he is, or himself kicks his Presidential boom to pieces.

Who manoeuvred Roosevelt into this predicament?

If, in "ways that are dark and by tricks that are vain," learned by him from the Chinese stokesman with whom he displaces American labor on his ships, Hanna engineered and lured Roosevelt into the performance of the 3rd instant, the trick was certainly masterly;

If, as it is equally possible, Roosevelt's own "strenuous" tom foolery is responsible for this move of his to settle the strike, and end the "intolerable situation," then he dug his own grave, and Hanna has the credit for quickly having availed himself of the opportunity by posting his labor lieutenant Mitchell on the proposition to make.

In the meantime, while this duel for practical preferment is going on, Labor bleeds,

played like a foot-ball by capitalists and their labor lieutenants.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded October 2006