

# DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 6, NO. 76.

NEW YORK, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 1905.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

## BETWEEN TWO FIRES—NAY, THREE.

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**T**HE consular despatches from China are to the effect that the Chinese boycott against American goods is growing worse rather than better. It has subsided in certain places, but in larger areas the boycott has spread and deepened. Simultaneously the news comes from Washington that all negotiations on the new exclusion treaty between this country and China have practically ceased, awaiting the return of Secretary Taft with such information as he has gathered from the authorities “regarding China’s feeling and the length to which that Government is willing to go in the new compact.”—All of which tells the tale that the Working Class of America are between two fires—nay, three.

If the boycott continues and progresses the result will be a stoppage of production in all the goods exported to China. The export trade of the United States to China amounted in 1903 to upwards of \$138,500,000. What a derangement of this trade will mean is obvious. Factories will shut down or slacken up, with the result of fewer men at work, and relative lower earnings. At best, the worker is held at the ragged edge: any pushing from behind shoves him still nearer to the abyss. On the other hand, if the boycott is discontinued, it means that the Chinese Government has won the diplomatic point now at issue between it and Washington. The former Chinese exclusion treaties have long galled the Government at Peking: they placed China in a position of inferiority: Americans could go to, reside in and move out of China at will, the Chinese, however, could not sojourn in the United States except under severe restrictions, both in point of numbers and of time. China has been insisting, if not upon absolute equality, at least upon substantial modifications of the present status. A diplomatic victory by China means an increased Chinese immigration in the United States, and that, in turn, means a further overstocking of the Labor Market. True enough, it is not from foreign

countries that flows the larger stream of Labor into the already overstocked market. Privately owned improved machinery displaces Labor steadily. For every one emigrant from abroad who helps to swell the Labor Market, the native privately owned machine swells it with three. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the more the Labor market is overstocked, whether from China or elsewhere, the lower wages will be.

And thus the Working Class of the land finds itself between two fires—nay, three! If the boycott goes on, there is a stoppage of production, with the result of greater idleness and suffering; if the boycott stops, the stoppage will be due to the consent of the Government to allow more Chinamen to immigrate, and that means lower wages too; finally, if both the boycott stops and the immigration of Chinamen does not increase, home conditions are such that the increasingly improved and privately owned machine will continue to deluge the Labor Market with surplus labor—and that also means worse conditions.

Such is the blissful plight of the Working Class under Capitalism—that best of all possible social systems, if our professors, politicians, labor fakirs and pulpiteers are to be believed.

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Uploaded March 2008

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