

Daniel De Leon

Editorial: Open Letter to the Toiling Masses of the Country

FELLOW WAGE SLAVES: The ship of our nation is shipping the sea. The capitalist system of production, whereby the things necessary to produce the necessities of life are held and operated by private individuals for their private profit, has worked itself to its logical conclusion faster here than anywhere else. Untrammelled by the lingering, however loose, bonds of European feudalism, unchecked by the vestiges of honor and idealism of older systems in older countries, capitalism has developed here into its rankest form—our land is to-day the theater of the most extensive system of exploitation, of Governmental rapine and of popular dismay.

A fabulous amount of wealth, the product of the brain and manual labor of the land, lies almost wholly in the hands of an idle class, while the workers are in misery, dependent for their very existence upon the nation's parasites. This evil is not incidental or transitory; it will be either aggravated or must be uprooted. Palliatives without end, expectations innumerable, quack medicines untold have been tried, indulged in and applied, but the evil increases. Grave cases require heroic treatment. Our ship of state will founder amid the drowning moans of all on board, unless intrepidity, firmness and wisdom speedily seize the helm.

Paragraph 3, Section 8 of the Constitution of the United States gives Congress the power "to regulate commerce." Either our Congress and King Hog in the White House are too

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ignorant to understand, or too perverse to carry out this order. Commerce is not necessarily what Capitalism means by it; commerce is swindle only when it and its feeder, production, are left to the anarchy of individual efforts. The individualistic system of commerce and production has run itself into the ground. It is the duty of Congress at this critical moment to rise to the occasion, and to regulate commerce in the only manner in which it can be regulated, i.e., in the only manner in which it can be turned from a system of wholesale chicanery, productive only of the country's ruin, into one of mutual exchange, productive of the people's freedom—and that way is to nationalize the nation's industries. Will our rulers do that?

The capital of the land is the product of the toilers exclusively; to us it belongs. Stripped of it, we are slaves; equipped therewith we are free men. With less right than the Crown of England had to these colonies, it is now usurped by the capitalist class; with greater right than the Revolutionary Fathers claimed these colonies, the capital of the land may now be claimed by the toilers of to-day. The representatives of the newly born United States of America, in General Congress assembled on July 4, 1776, declared these colonies were and of right ought to be free; the enforcement of the supplementary declaration by us, the working class of the land, is now due that the nation's machinery of production—its land and capital—are and of right ought to be the property of the people collectively.

In the economic blindness and political superstition into which you were steeped by our exploiters, you placed the present Executive and Congress into power. A long, bitter, bloody experience, culminating with the recent outrages in the mining districts and Chicago, has demonstrated with a vengeance that they, together with all our other rulers in office—whether Democratic, Republican or what not, whether Presidents, Congressmen, Federal Judges, or what else—are either idle plutocrats themselves, or the pliant lackeys of these. Sworn to uphold the Constitution and the laws of the land, they have deliberately violated, or have neglected to enforce them

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lest, for sooth, they injure the interests of a trifling minority, the class of the fleecers, whose tastes, character, habits and aspirations render them aliens in this country, and repulsive to democracy. The majority of you have trusted them too long; you can trust them no longer. There is no hope in them; they can be sooner ended than mended; away with them; sweep them all out of political existence.

Within four short months you can strike a blow that will set the enemy reeling, place you on our {your?} feet, and lead you with steady, rapid strides to freedom. That blow must be struck at the hustings; it must be struck under the international banner of Socialism; it must be struck at the murderous system of Wage Slavery; it must demand the unconditional surrender of Capitalism.

FELLOW WAGE SLAVES: Nothing short of absolute freedom can save us and our little ones from absolute servitude; nothing short of the control of the public powers by ourselves can remove us from the wrong and place us on the right side of the guns, the deputies' Derringers, the Judges' "Gatling guns on paper;" and nothing short of this can stead us in our struggle for justice.

The Socialist Labor Party is the party of the working class the world over, bleeding when that class bleeds, rejoicing when that class rejoices; science and the Spirit of the Age battle on its side; it marshals you the way that you should go; its colors have never trailed, but have ever waived {waved?} in the face of the enemy defiantly, proudly, conscious of ultimate victory; join that grand international army of the world's liberators and emancipate yourselves.

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