

Daniel De Leon

Editorial: A New Era

The mountains have heaved in the great social center of Chicago and have brought forth, not, this time, a ridiculous mouse, but a new, a portentous era, for the Social Revolution in America.

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Hitherto treason to the United States was construed strictly to mean the raising of arms against the political sovereignty of the land. This construction sprang from the economic conditions under which the Federal Constitution was framed. The political power, the government of the land, was theoretically and *de facto* the property of the whole, at least of a majority, of the people. With the development of capitalism, conditions began to change by degrees tho' the theory was yet adhered to. But the time has come when, conditions having been wholly changed, the theory itself is now boldly repudiated. By construing the conduct of the officers of the American Railway Union as potential, if not actual treason, JUDGE GROSSCUP correctly enunciates the theory that the political power, the government of the land, no longer belongs to the whole people, but to the property-holding minority among them. That the interests of these are the interests of the government; that an attack upon these is an attack upon the government; that, in short, the sovereignty of the nation no longer resides in the political offices filled by the people, but that it actually resides in the capitalist class.

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That this has not always been so, either in fact or in theory, JUDGE GROSSCUP'S charge to the Federal Grand Jury clearly indicates. He speaks of "great changes" that have taken place, he alludes to the "grave problems" these changes have given birth to, and he announces the necessity of solving these problems "courageously," whereupon he forthwith proceeds with admirable courage to solve one of these problems—on behalf and in the interest of the class which he recognizes is the ruling one, of the class in which his practised eye discerns political power and governmental authority, or which he is a limb.

No previous discussion here, no new shaking of the cards and consultation with the people who have been holding a different view. The capitalist class is in power, the capitalist class is sovereign; all constitutions, laws and guarantees repugnant to existing conditions must give way and accommodate themselves to the fact. To rise against capital is treason, the doer of such a deed is stripped of all civil rights; his mail may be violated, his house may be searched without a warrant. The class that rules dictates the law.

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JUDGE GROSSCUP deserves praise for the frankness, the boldness, the courage with which he stated the facts and enforced his conclusions. His conduct can not be misunderstood. It tears down with commendable courage all the green illusions which less bold upholders of capitalism than himself have hitherto blinded the people with.

Where the things necessary to produce the necessities of life are the property of private individuals, society will be divided into two main classes, the class of the property-holders and that of the property-less, the class of the fleecers and that of the fleeced, the class of the idlers and that of the workers. Where the class of the property-holders, fleecers and idlers exists, class rule, class law, class justice is inevitable against

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the class of the property-less, the fleeced, the workers. Laws, constitutions and statutes depend for their interpretation and execution upon the class that has them in keeping. That we are scourged with class justice is a result of the existence of the classes here. JUDGE GROSSCUP, to say nothing of CLEVELAND, presents the problem clearly before the people:

Continue the capitalist system, with its private ownership of the land and machinery of production, and you will have class rule with its accompaniment of serfdom;

Freedom is the daughter of collective ownership of the nation's land and machinery of production. In the Co-operative Commonwealth the classes are not possible because no one can stand there between the people and their living.

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But it is not on this point only that the convulsions in Chicago have spread light. They have cleared wonderfully the path toward correct methods.

The favorite club with which the class of the fleeced, the working class, have hitherto striven to parry the economic blows of class rule was the strike. But this club is woefully weak:

In the first place, the strike is a manifestation of force; force in some way or other is implied by it and must accompany it. But force will be met with force. The force of capitalism enthroned in power consists of the army, navy, police, militias, deputies, marshals. What implements of warfare does the strike bring with it to cope with these? None! A weak man may, if insulted, fly at a much stronger regardless of consequences. So, likewise, unarmed workmen may fly in a moment of despair at a cruel employer and strike against him. But the calmly planned strike that does not furnish the strikers with guns and does not prepare them for war is an act of folly that verges on crime.

In the second place, the strike has never yet demanded the abolition of the cause that lies at the bottom of the wrongs

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complained of. It has always objected to results, and, either left causes untouched, or even proclaimed itself a firm upholder of them.

To go into a strike declaring oneself in favor of the “rights of capital” is to take the ground from under the strike; the position is ludicrously illogical.

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There is nothing that pursues a more relentless logic than social evolution. The ills complained of to-day are the result of class rule; class rule is based upon the private ownership of the means of production. This is the point to attack. So long as the cause of this evil exists, not only can no permanent relief be achieved, but even temporary relief will be harder and harder to reach. A people’s social system is either carved by the sword or decreed by the ballot. Civilization justly rejects the arbitrament of force before the methods of peace have been exhausted.

As there is no solution of the existing and crying social ills outside of the Socialist or Co-operative Commonwealth, neither is there any other path to that goal but the political organization of the toilers, independently from all the parties of capital, and their united vote for that party only, and none other, that demands the overthrow of the capitalist system of production and of wage slavery.

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These lessons have been preached before, and before this have they been exemplified by the events of the day. But never before have they been preached with the voice of thunder and the peal of musketry that recently went forth from Chicago, or were they demonstrated with more crushing instances.

With the closing of this railroad strike, a new and promissful era is opened in the history of the Social Revolution in America. This era will be the last. May it be short. The times are ripe. The capitalist social system can no longer buckle its distempered cause within the belt of reason.

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May the next century dawn, as it promises, upon an emancipated America.

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