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EDITORIAL

SETTING PRECEDENTS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

CAN anyone picture to himself how that paragon of “Americanism,” of “Patriotism,” of “Law and Order,” of “Morality” and of “Bravery,” who at present fills the Presidential chair of the nation, would deport himself if the workingmen were to declare: “We can no longer submit to trifling. We must forthwith take the matter into our own hands!”?

Imagine the workingmen gazing at the ever mounting column of the wealth they produce, the ever sinking share that falls to them. Imagine them passing in review the several nostrums with the aid of which their dinner pails were to be filled, and recalling with grief that whether the tariff was low or was high, whether the Sherman Silver Act was in force or a virtual gold standard was raised, whether the nation “expanded” and “imperialized” or did the other thing, the conditions of life for Labor steadily declined. Imagine them keeping tally on the increased mortality in their own ranks;—imagine that, and then imagine them declaring: “We can no longer submit to trifling. We must forthwith take the matter into our own hands!” Would not the above-named paragon of virtues flare up? The suggestion suggests an interesting picture.

And yet that identical language is the language held by President Roosevelt in justification of what? In justification of the highway robbery he has perpetrated on the international domain by plundering the Republic of Colombia of one of its States in the interest of the Panama Canal lobby!

The wealth of the land is the product of Labor. An idle class now holds it. It holds the wealth produced by Labor, thanks to a plundering system, that is legalized by what it pleases to call “Law,” but which, however, is as Carlyle termed the thing, nothing but “buccaneers’ log book.” What “morality,” what “patriotism,” what “Americanism” and decency is back of the “morality,” “patriotism,”

“Americanism” and decency that the Roosevelt class invokes against the workingman may be judged by the conduct of these gentlemen in Panama, and by the reasons that they justify their conduct with—“We can no longer submit to trifling. We must forthwith take the matter into our own hands!”—What matter, the property of another nation?

If the Roosevelt class may “take into their own hands” the territory of another nation that they do not even claim to have produced; if the Roosevelt class may, not even in pursuit of “self-preservation,” but simply to “round up their estate” indulge in spoliation, abroad;—if that is right, how infinitely righter is not the awakening conscience of the Working Class, which is prompting them to declare they are “getting tired of being trifled with by the capitalist class,” and which is moving them “to take the matter of their emancipation into their own hands.”

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