

# DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 11, NO. 138.

NEW YORK, TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 1910.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

## THE WORKERS' HOPE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

“The real economic hope of the worker is in greatly increased accumulation of capital. ‘Capital, more capital, and yet more capital,’ should be his watchword. At every increase of accumulated wealth he should rub his hands and congratulate himself. Instead of capital being the enemy, it is the friend. Instead of the worker wishing to see capital destroyed, it should be his end and aim to see it built up and increased.”

**T**HIS, from the aristocratic London *Spectator*, sounds nice and plausible—just as if an oysterman, with a nice fat bivalve on his lap ready for opening, should address it so:

“Now, oyster dear, don’t squirm so. Your real economic hope is in greatly increased sharpness of knives. ‘Sharpness, more sharpness, and yet more sharpness,’ should be your watchword. At every improvement of knife-blades you should rub your shells and congratulate yourself. The knife that opens you, instead of being your enemy, is your friend. Instead of wishing to see knife-blades destroyed, it should be your sole endeavor in life to see them enlarged, thickened, and ground ever keener, that you may be opened all the easier.”

Capital does not, as the folks who live on our backs would like to see us believe, mean wealth. In popular parlance; the sun rises. In scientific language the sun stands still and the earth dips toward it. In the popular lingo handed down to us from the exploiters’ schools, capital and wealth are the identical thing. In the speech of science, capital is wealth with one added function—that of exploiting, or wringing surplus value out of labor.

When the tools needed for production were simple and cheap, everyone could employ himself. There was wealth, but there was no capital. In this country, at least, where everyone got an even start, there were no John D. Rockefellers, but

neither were there any Henry Jacksons falling starving on the street. Everyone possessed the full value of his labor. He gave none of it up to any master.

As soon, however, as the tool of production became too great for every man to acquire, wealth took on a new power. In the hands of those who possessed it, it became a means of purchasing the tool that all needed; it grew into an instrument of oppression; it became capital. Those who worked for the owner of the tool, the capitalist, no longer enjoyed the full product of their labor. The major part they had to turn over to him. The workman was now, as it were, put through the wringer. Whatever of wealth he could carry with him between the rollers, became his wages. What was wrung out in the process—and this was always the greater portion—flowed into the boss's tub, labelled "Profits." Every increase of capital amounted to a tightening of the screws—more wealth stayed in the boss's tub, less sifted through in the pay envelope.

Hence capital is not the workingman's friend. Its increased accumulation spells for him not cause for rejoicing, but increased suffering. And what he must do to save himself is just what the aristocratic *Spectator* warns him against doing: destroy capital—not wealth, that is, but that especial function of wealth which consists of opening and sucking the juice out of him as an oyster is opened with a knife.

That he can only do by organizing industrially and politically for the overthrow of capital-ism and the establishment of Social-ism. That, and that alone, is the worker's hope.<sup>1</sup>

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.  
Uploaded November 2011

[slpns@slp.org](mailto:slpns@slp.org)

---

<sup>1</sup> [Repeated Aug. 3, 1913, with slight modifications.—R.B.]