

EDITORIAL

## THE “MOTHER OF PARLIAMENTS.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

**W**HAT has proudly called itself “the mother of parliaments,” and still more proudly listened to itself being given the name—the British Parliament—has been making an exhibition of itself, such an exhibition that some of her “children” have been comparing her late performances with those of her grandchild, the Austrian, and of her great-grandchild, the Hungarian parliament.

We have no sympathy with the estimate of parliaments made by those who endeavor to illustrate the uselessness of modern parliaments by tracing the name to the verb “to talk.” It is senseless to decry “talk” per se. “Talk” follows Thought, and precedes Action. While the term “parliament” is derived from the verb “talk,” parliaments have, from their inception, been begotten of Thought, which begot Talk, which begot Action. Parliaments have ACTED.

The valid objection to modern parliaments is not to their TALK, but to the kind of ACTION that their talk generates. The valid objection to modern parliaments is that the material conditions from which they sprung have changed, and that modern material conditions demand another kind of Talk than that that modern parliaments are the scene of, and leading to another kind of Action than that that the Talk of modern parliaments leads to.

The modern parliament is a committee of the Ruling Class, into which committee occasionally members of the Ruled Class are “cleverly” smuggled—as happens in the instance of our American parliament, called “Congress,” into which “Union-card” carrying members of Mr. Gompers’s and kindred unions are smuggled,—in order to help conceal the parliament’s real make-up, and its real purpose, to wit, to keep down the Ruled Class, at the same time that the Rulers settle their own internal disputes.

If parliaments, that is, the gatherings of representatives of the people, were things inseparable from Class Rule, then, indeed, they should be made branch-and-root work of—talk, action and all. But parliaments are not social growths inseparable from the blight of Class Rule—“quite otherwise and to the contrary.”

Class Rule is predicated upon Classes—social layers, some of which are in possession, others of which are stripped of the necessities for production. Where Classes exist, there is Class Rule; where Class Rule is, there are committees of the Rulers. Class Rule was not always. Hence parliaments, as instruments of oppression, were not of all time. Time was, in the history of the race, when the “parliament”—occasionally a place, not for “talk” only, but also for a “dance”—was a committee of the whole communal tribe, a social growth requisite for the promotion of the welfare of the whole tribe.

Class distinctions smote the original “parliaments,” and raised upon their ruins the things that have degenerated into the present monstrosities variously called “Congresses.” “Chambers of Deputies,” “Reichstags,” “Diets,” “Skoupchinas,” and what not,—collectively bearing the name of “parliament.”

The material development, that brought on the Class Rule parliaments, is now developed so much further that the existence of the Class Rule parliament is being, in turn, menaced. The approaching old-time parliaments of the communal tribal days are casting their shadows before them. The day approaches when that old-time parliament, then developed into the up-to-date Industrial Parliament, will re-enter upon its own.

The British Parliament adjourned for several days. It will presently adjourn permanently. That adjournment awaits the hour when the organized useful occupations of America will send our parliament packing—in other words, when Socialism in America will toll the knell of capitalist rule, as Capitalism in America tolled, in 1776, the knell of feudal rule here and for Western and Central Europe.

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