

REPORT

GLEANINGS 'LONG THE ROAD. {2}

By DANIEL DE LEON

EN ROUTE TO DENVER, MARCH 12.—Have just returned from a “foray” in the rear smoking coach. Went thither to “take a census” on two heads among the workingmen, who usually crowd that coach, and are more accessible there than in the other coaches. The smoking coach was not as crowded as I found those coaches sixteen years ago, when, on the first tour I made for the Party across to the Pacific, I frequently dived into them on a similar errand.

The first census I took was on Unionism. There were 47 men in the coach; 5 were obviously bourgeois; the others workingmen. Of the 42 workingmen only 1 is not now and never was, in any Union. Of the remaining 41 only 3 are still members of a Union—1 a carpenter, 1 a telegrapher and 1 trainman. The other 38—2 carpenters, 1 teamster, 3 waiters, etc., etc., had all been members of a Union at some time, but would be blankety-blanked if they now joined any. The reasons were notoriously uniform—“sold out,” or “tricked out of work” by the inside ring, or “fired out” to make room for some favorite. I made no propaganda for the I.W.W.; only asked questions and listened. And as the answers came, the statement of the *Wall Street Journal* to the effect that the A.F. of L. is the bulwark of Capitalism, rose before my mind’s eye, and likewise did the underground wires between Belmont and the Gomperses come to sight. Craft or pure and simple Unionism disheartens the workers and scatters them away from the Union—a necessary weapon for Labor’s emancipation.

The second series of questions I put to the men looked to their family status. Capitalism struts forward as THE patron Saint of the family. Here were 42 men, none younger than 25, most of them above 30. Of these 42 only 10 were married. Their wives and children were left behind as far North and East as Grand Rapids, Mich., and as far East and South as New Jersey and Tennessee. They were forced

from home in search of work. Neither did they look as though the prospects of a family reunion were bright. The remaining 32 were unmarried. Some of the reasons given were as scientifically sound as they were couched in unprintable language. It all came down to this—the Patron Saint of the Family is, when looked into a little closely, a ruthless Attila; the scepter of the Southern slave-holder, who placed father, mother and child on the auctioneer's block and sold them to purchasers from distant and separate localities—that scepter has passed into the hands of the modern wage slave holder.

In Omaha a middle class Socialist party man called upon me at my hotel. He has 3 children, and is pinching himself to own his own home. He hoped for nothing from the workingman. He banked on his experience. What was that experience? They did not read, they did not post themselves. I gave him rope. It did not take long before the fact transpired that this self-same self-satisfied bourgeois did not read any Socialist paper. He did not see even the *Appeal to Reason* but once in a while. Of the important happenings of the last 6 months he knew worse than nothing—only such scraps as were utterly worthless. I asked him: “If the workingman can not be relied on for want of being posted; and if you are a fair sample of the middle class, and are so ill posted; who is going to bring help—the J. Pierpont Morgans?” The answer is still due.

The two Kansas City meetings had several visitors from Kansas. They were mostly S.P. friends who now “saw the cat” in their own party. The ferment is going on in Kansas, and there will be things doing. Likewise the two Omaha meetings had visitors from Iowa (Council Bluffs). Significant is the fact that the S.L.P. men, both in Kansas City and Omaha, have bravely got over the one-time Party fever to increase the membership. They were cured of that by the object lesson furnished by the S.P., in Omaha especially. Bigness being the S.P. slogan, everyone was taken in, with disastrous results. The S.L.P. have become “choice.” Anxious tho' they are for recruits, they will take none who does not know just what he is after. At Omaha, J.P. Roe, an I.W.W. man who is also the S.P. national committeeman for Nebraska, presided at my first meeting.

A curious incident happened in Omaha. After my second meeting a number of friends in the Movement (S.P. as well as S.L.P.) accompanied me to my room in my

hotel. Among the topics that turned up was the S.P. charge about *The People's* "abusiveness." Both the S.P. and the S.L.P. visitors agreed that the charge was false. One of the S.P. men said: "*The People's* 'abusiveness' consists in telling the truth and proving it. We want that." I then said: "The S.P. man, who says *The People* is 'abusive,' is guilty of double falsehood. What he says is false, in that *The People* is no more abusive than an indictment; what he says is furthermore false in that it implies that his party press is not 'abusive.' Abuse only, the making of unsupported charges and indulging in vilification of the S.L.P. is the stock in trade of the S.P. press," saying this I took out of my grip a copy of the *Appeal to Reason*, dated July 22, 1899, and passing the paper to one of them requested him to read aloud a certain column. He did so amidst general amusement. The column consisted of a string of paragraphs each more billingsgaty than the other. One of these paragraphs, typical of the lot, was particularly relished. It was as follows:

"Daniel De Leon is not a Socialist and the *Appeal to Reason* will furnish the public proof of it if De Leon dares call for it. But Danny is afraid to call for fear he will be landed behind the bars before he got done with it.

"Dear De Leon, Sec?

"Fraternally,

"*Appeal to Reason.*"

The passage illumined, not only the S.P. charge of *The People's* "abusiveness," but also the *Appeal's* lining up with the capitalist sheets in abuse of the Industrialists and in praise for the reactionists at last September's I.W.W. convention.

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