

EDITORIAL

AN OMINOUS APPARITION.

By DANIEL DE LEON

IT is no idle boast on the part of the Hearst papers that the size, tone, and other features of the state conventions of New York and Alabama that launched the Independence national party, was a decided shock to the old-timers of the two old parties. Nor is the boast idle that these same old-timers look forward with undisguisable apprehension to the State conventions that are to follow suit in Massachusetts, California and most other States. Superficial observers pronounced Hearst dead last November. Hearst and Hearstism are very much alive factors in the land to-day. None will be wise who would sniff at either. They are both to be reckoned with.

In the first of the two addresses *Two Pages from Roman History* the warning is given:

“Let there be no fatalism in our councils. The Socialist Republic depends, not upon material conditions only; it depends upon these—plus clearness of vision to assist the evolutionary process. Nor was the agency of the intellect needed at any previous stage of social evolution in the Class Struggle to the extent that it is needful at this, the culminating one of all.

“Is the revolutionary class of this Age living under ripened conditions to avail itself of its opportunity and fulfill its historic mission? Or is the revolutionary spark of our Age to be smothered and banked up till, as in the Rome of old, it leap from the furnace, a weapon of national suicide?”

In each country the Socialist Movement will undergo an experience different in many respects from the experience it undergoes in others. The difference will be due to the special conditions of each. Capitalist concentration and methods is not the all-sufficient factor to determine results. A strictly middle class party has no prospects in the land. But a party of wild-eyed discontent, led by men of wealth, who, like Hearst, fail to understand the real issue, but will take up its slogans in the sincere

belief that the beast of capitalism can be tamed—such a party unquestionably has opportunities that are ominous.

Caesar and his co-adjutors sincerely believed they could reform Rome. When brought face to face with the practical work of the contemplated reform, Caesar was forced to “compromise.” Out of the compromise resulted the Empire. Whether one compares Hearst with Caesar, or the large floods of still utterly uninformed workingmen, vast numbers of which are deliberately misled, with the Roman proletariat, the parallel will be found striking. It is not with Caesar the Conqueror that Hearst must be compared, but with the Caesar whom Roman history describes before he became a conqueror. In other words, Caesar must be compared with the Hearst of to-day, and the Hearst of to-day with the Caesar of the days of Pompey.

Caesar was of “Senatorial rank”, a requirement that the Roman masses considered indispensable for leadership; Hearst is a multimillionaire, a quality that fills many poor people’s eyes to-day. Caesar was a gay liver; so was Hearst. Caesar was despised by his fellow patricians—they took him to be stupid, a profligate and an idler; Hearst enjoys the contempt of his own class; no better than he in conduct, they are worse than he in Phariseism, and they jeer and sneer at his incapacity just as Caesar’s fellow patricians jeered at their future master. It is not an impossibility that the special capacity which Roman conditions required and which Caesar displayed soon as he had the opportunity, may be duplicated with a twentieth century variation to the tune when Hearst gets his opportunity.

Hearst, or Hearstism, is an ominous apparition. To the old timers the apparition bodes death, and death only. To the Socialists the apparition is a summons to draw close the ranks. The very ominousness of the apparition is promiseful to the embattled Socialists—although it is fraught with the threat of a strain upon them that will test them to the utmost.

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

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