

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 9, NO. 245.

NEW YORK, TUESDAY, MARCH 2, 1909.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

STRAUS A MUFFER.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE opportunity of a life time was muffed by Oscar S. Straus, the Secretary of the Department of Commerce and Labor.

Dr. Albert Warren Ferris, president of the New York State Lunacy Commission, and a fellow member of the Commission, Dr. Wilgus, having dealt a back-handed swipe to Secretary Straus's alertness in office by claiming that forty-five and seven-tenths per cent. of the insane in the New York State hospitals are of foreign birth, in other words, that Mr. Straus is so remiss in his duties as to allow a large number of lunatic immigrants to land—this charge having been hurled at Secretary Straus, the opportunity of his life was thrown into the gentleman's hands to confute his assailants with a towering fact, and himself to come off with flying colors.

Only a few days ago Secretary Straus uttered *ex cathedra* the theory that "there is no real conflict of interests, or classes. If the several classes would only draw closer together and know each other better the 'conflict' would vanish."

Secretary Straus is an honest man. Being honest the above view can not be considered the product of dishonesty. There is but one alternative left—that the view issued from a lunatic's cranium.

Indeed, no bigger chunk of lunacy could be imagined than to expect the disappearance of conflict if the classes only knew each other better, drew closer together.

It is just possible that, to-day, many a member of the capitalist class succumbs to his own fairy tale about his being Labor's brother. If he is, then Labor is his brother. If Labor is his brother, then Labor must be moved by kindly feelings towards him, despite occasional and brotherly spats. The nearer the capitalist draws to his "brother," and the better he learns to know him, all the more completely will he discover that he has been the victim of his own fancy. Labor,

being the sole producer of all wealth, Labor instinctively strains to the sole possession of its own product. An intimate acquaintance with Labor can not choose but bring home to brother capitalist the realization of the shocking fact that the law of his “brother” Labor’s anatomy” is to deprive him of existence, or compel, him to work, which spells death to the capitalist. Is a “better knowledge” of his brother Labor likely to promote anti-conflict feelings in brother capitalist’s breast?

Ditto, ditto with brother Labor. The oft repeated fairy tale anent the brotherhood of capitalist and Labor may, it certainly does confuse the mind of many a member in Labor’s rank. Let Labor learn to know its brother better, and the result would be that the mists of the fairy tale would rise in the measure that knowledge was acquired. Labor would perceive that the law of its “brother” capitalist’s existence is the law of the blood-sucking vampire, with Labor as the blood-sucked body. Is a “better knowledge” of its brother, the capitalist, likely to quicken anti-conflict pulsations in brother Labor’s heart?

Obviously the better “brother” capitalist and “brother” Labor know each other, all the larger is the powder magazine of potential explosion that is gathered at their feet. Obviously, the “closer they draw together” the more inevitable the conflict.

These are undeniable facts and irrefutable conclusions. To say, as Secretary Straus did, that a “better knowledge” of each other by Capitalist and Labor, and a “closer drawing together” of the two, would cause all “conflict to vanish,” is a monumental piece of lunacy.

When Secretary Straus was charged with allowing lunatics to immigrate, the gentleman’s cue was not to answer with elaborate figures proving that the percentage of lunacy was overwhelmingly among the natives. Figures lie. Facts don’t. Secretary Straus should have boldly stepped forth as a solid fact saying:

“Foreigners are lunatics? Fudge, look at me! I am a native. What lunatic can surpass me in lunacy?”

It was an opportunity muffed.

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

Uploaded July 2010

slpns@slp.org