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EDITORIAL

DR. STEINMETZ'S WISE WORDS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

ALWAYS interesting, always instructive whenever he can be induced to speak for publication, the views of Dr. Charles Proteus Steinmetz, Professor of Electrical Engineering at Union College of Schenectady, uttered at a recent interview with a *Times* reporter, are peculiarly interesting and instructive, being peculiarly timely.

The *Times* of the 12th of this month reports Dr. Steinmetz as saying:

“In the line of organizing a giant industry Mr. Carnegie is one of the world’s greatest geniuses. If he would write books or talk about industrial organizations I would listen to him.

“But Mr. Carnegie prefers to talk of peace and literature. And so it goes all the way along the line. When a man makes a success slaughtering hogs he talks to the people about art. College professors lecture the President on how to run the country. And along comes a Mr. Crane, who lectures the professors on how to run the colleges. There isn’t a shoemaker in the country who, when it comes to talking, is willing to stick to his last.

“In this country all a man need do is attain a little eminence and he immediately begins to talk. Usually his eminence is financial, and the greater this eminence the more he talks and the further his voice reaches.

“I don’t blame the rich people for talking; many of them don’t know what else to do with themselves. The fault is with those who listen. If no one would listen no harm would be done.

“But the American people are willing listen to any one who has attained prominence. The main fact is that we’ve heard a man’s name a great many times; that makes us ready to accept whatever he says.

“In no other country could these people get the ear of the public. When as eminent a man as the German Emperor talks on engineering problems the Germans do not take him seriously.

“The trouble with us is that we’re a young Nation. Like children, we like to be amused and startled. Great as our educational system is, we lack the critical sense that is to be found in the older countries. We don’t ask: Does this man know what he is talking about? We listen to one who talks most and loudest.”

Wise words these be, and from a wise man, and containing wise advice to our people.

Uncritical people are credulous people. They are the charlatan's opportunity.

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