

EDITORIAL

ROOSEVELT ON PENSIONS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

WHEN Col. Theodore Roosevelt stated: “Interest isn’t in pensions for ex-Presidents, but in pensions for the small man who doesn’t have a chance to save and who, when he becomes superannuated, faces direct poverty”—when he said that, was it the cheap demagogue, or was it the long-headed statesman of capitalism that spoke?

We think it was the latter.

The late presidential campaign surely taught Col. Roosevelt many a thing that he did not know before. Among the things thus learned by practical experience are:—

First, that the ship of Capitalism is rocking dangerous in the trough of the social storm-lashed sea;

Secondly, that the apparent reason therefore is the relatively small number of those interested in the saving of the ship.

Is there any cheaper way of enlisting the interest of a horde of people in keeping at the pumps, to keep the ship from sinking, than a pension policy for “the small man who doesn’t have a chance to save”?

Hardly.

And cleverly is the sentence framed. Its major premises, implied tho’ not expressed, amount to the declaration of a principle: the principle that the crew of the political ship must be treated not unlike the crew on the merchant marine.

As indispensable, in their way, as the captain, are the men “before the mast.” They, nevertheless, receive for their labor such a pittance, that when they “become superannuated” they face “direct poverty.”

Nor is this all. In no industry, except the nautical, is the proletariat actually, not figuratively speaking, at the mercy of the commander. The captain has power

over life and death. Similarly with “the small man” employed in the Government service. A strike by him needs no police force to quell. It is mutiny—and punishable summarily, very different from the way the “large man” in Government is situated. When Congressmen want higher wages, they simply vote themselves larger salaries.

In short, the Colonel’s major premises amount not simply to a declaration of principle, it amounts to legislating the principle into law. A very effective method of legislation, not infrequently resorted to by a Ruling Class is to have some prominent spokesman state the principle as a matter of course.

Time ever is of the essence of success. To gain time is every culprit’s move. The direr his stress, all the more valuable is Time. Pension to hordes of “small men” in the Government employ will insure, without extra pay, hordes of gougers and bruisers for the “large men” of Capital.

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