

EDITORIAL

## THE SENTENCE OF MRS. PANKHURST.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**T**O approvers and upholders of things as they are, the three years penitentiary sentence, pronounced by the London court, upon the distinguished suffragist leader, Emmeline Pankhurst, has been a welcome occasion to read lengthy lectures to “social elements of disturbance,” upon the need of law and order, and the need of “severity” when “things are carried on too far.” Even the *New York Evening Post*, an advocate of “Votes for Women,” yields in its issue of the 3rd of this month, to its closer affinity with the powers that be, and, coming out in its true colors, declares that “no plea of political motive can be admitted” in Mrs. Pankhurst’s behalf, because, if such plea “were permitted to avail in the case of suffragists, we should soon have Socialists blowing up bridges and Anarchists cutting throats, and then demanding that they go scot-free on the ground that they were simply trying to terrorize a bourgeois society into granting their demands.”

The principle of Law is that the Law aids the wide-awake, not the sleepy heads. He who, having legal methods of redress, neglects them, drops outside of the breastworks. The general principle applies in political life. Those who, being equipped with the ballot, neglect to use it, or use it falsely, or sleepily, or even spurn it—they, to be sure, strip themselves of the right to plead “political motive.” Otherwise with those who have not the ballot, and who, accordingly, are barred from the political arena.

The principle that there is an end to patience, even to the patience of the proverbially patient ass, is embodied in the opening passages of the Declaration of Independence. People who have exhausted all available peaceful means to secure the ballot, whereby peacefully to express their political views; people who have argued and pleaded for the possession of that peaceful weapon, and are met with a silence

that is a brutally eloquent repetition of Tweed's: "What are you going to do about it?"—such people have run up against a stone wall, the limit-line of patience. Those who refuse to grant to one half the adult population the peaceful weapon of the ballot—it is such people who urge violence—it is they who commit the disturbance—they are the inciters to the destruction of property. They are the guilty ones.

None who has sense, and is decent enough to use his senses properly, will be taken in with the attempted parallel between Socialists who would blow up bridges in order to terrorize bourgeois society and the sorely tried female suffragists; and the attempt to insinuate that Socialists would blow up bridges, and to bracket them with throat-cutting Anarchists renders the parallel all the more inglorious. Male citizens, as fast as they are rescued from the turpitude of capitalism, find themselves equipped with the ballot; they use it; they use it for all it is worth by turning the agitation, that is implied in political action, into an educator for more Socialists, and for the proper organization of the same; and they train themselves in all the precautions that experience teaches a revolutionary class must protect itself with against the crimes which a Ruling Class ever is ready to resort to against the weapon of peace—the ballot, and against all the depredations which a Ruling Class is ever ready to commit upon the field of peaceful clash—the hustings.

Neither can the justifiable acts of the Emmeline Pankhursts queer the Socialists; nor can the up-to-date civilized and, withal sane Socialists queer the tactics of the Emmeline Pankhursts. The sentence pronounced by the Judge upon the lady was pronounced upon himself, along with the brutally deaf reigning males of Great Britain.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.  
Uploaded February 2015

[slpns@slp.org](mailto:slpns@slp.org)