

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 13, NO. 328.

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, MAY 24, 1913.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

OUR AMERICAN AUGURS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

PROTECTED industries, that is, the magnates who own such industries, are being interviewed on a nation-wide scale. With hardly an exception, the note they strike is funereal; and the tears are dropped, not in their own behalf, except so far as their own troubles “foreshadow starvation for the working people.” It is of the working people that the protected magnates think; it is for the working people that they weep; it is with the working people in mind that they foretell hard times. In a nut-shell, what they say is: “American labor is better paid than European labor. The instant we are made to compete on an equal basis with the product of foreign pauper labor, American labor must come down to the pauper labor of Europe.”

At the same time that this language is being held, language of very different import is being held, and is being backed by conduct to match, on the part of other Interests, protected, as well as unprotected. The language is that European immigrant labor is so very much more “efficient,” that is, can be made to work so much harder, and to submit to so very much lower wages, that it is the part of patriotism to displace the domestic workman with the imported one, and, if necessary to the enforcement of the process, to set up military courts along side of the existing civil and criminal courts, the military courts to deal summarily with the domestic labor that should brace itself against “the good of the country.” Language of this nature is being expressly held by the *Wall Street Journal*, and conduct in keeping with such language is being put into practice in the State of West Virginia, and is being defended by the Senators of that State and of Utah.

In, ancient Rome there were certain officers. Their name was Augurs. Their function was to observe the skies, the flight of birds, and the convulsions of the en-

trails of sacrificed animals. The Augurs then prophesied of times to come the event. The story goes that the Augurs, who at first took themselves seriously, presently were themselves amused at their fraudulent practices, and never passed one another on the streets without thrusting their tongues into their cheeks.

The magnates of our Interests—the protected and the unprotected—are the Augurs of our country and our generation. They have been foretelling events with much assurance. The fraudulency of their priesthood surely has overcome them. Is it possible for them to keep their faces when they meet one another?

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Uploaded August 2015

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