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FIRST EDITORIAL

Hopelessly Blind

By DANIEL DE LEON

Both the capitalist authorities, that are back of the University of Chicago, and the lightheaded, fantastical ideologists, with which the Windy City seems to swarm, are exhibiting the hopeless blindness that an all-wise Providence has seen fit to smite their respective tribes with.

The one expels from, instead of, as they should, carefully grappling Prof. E.W. BEMIS to the "University"; the others grapple to, instead of expelling, as they should, the Professor from their hearts.

Professor BEMIS is a believer and advocate of "Arbitration as a means to compose the difficulties between Capital and Labor, and establish peace between the two." Because he believes that Labor has "some rights," the purblind capitalist owners of the University of Chicago want none of him, without stopping to think that the most effective way, we would even say, the only effective way, to delay the overthrow of capitalism, is to raise in the popular mind that confusion upon the essence of the Social Question which nothing is so well calculated to raise as the notion that "Arbitration" is at all applicable. On the other hand, because he does grant "some rights" to Labor, the lightheaded, fantastical ideologists cling to him, without stopping to consider that, among the most effective ways to hamper and clog the march of Labor to the conquest of its own, is to weaken its moral strength, which nothing is so well calculated to weaken as the notion of "Arbitration," i.e., the imputing of "Rights" to the brigand class against whom the proletariat is struggling.

Apart from the question of Rights, "Arbitration" between Capital and Labor is an impossibility; the notion is an all-around absurdity.

Many a small employer, driven by the competition of larger ones, stands before the alternative of, either bankruptcy, because he cannot produce as cheaply as the big fellow; or reducing his cost of production by reducing the pay-roll of his employes, and

thereby carry on the war of competition with his more powerful rival. What good could arbitration do there? Advice the employer to let up on the workers and go into bankruptcy? Preposterous! Advice the workers to submit to being fleeced still worse for the benefit of the boss? Ridiculous! There is no help here—so long as the boss wants to be in the fleecing business and his workmen refuse to join hands to upset the fleecing system—other than to let the two fight it out, and learn by the hard knocks of experience. Whoever steps in between will be caught in the cogs of the wheels of the capitalist mechanism. No good can come of it.

As to the large monopolistic concerns, the matter stands otherwise. They could well afford living wages to their wage slaves. But right here it is that a right diagnosis of capitalism is necessary, and that a wrong one, such as Prof. BEMIS makes, leads to conclusions that are fatally false. Capitalism is born of rapine. In the language with which MARX sums up the historic origin of capital, it rises “dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt.” This congenital mark capitalism carries with it all along its development, and is strongest where the beast is fullest developed. The large capitalist could, but he will not, improve the condition of his wage slaves; he has tasted blood, and the more powerful he becomes the more bloodthirsty is he. Would arbitration curb him? An order that he grant the wages demanded by his workers, if enforced, would be tantamount to a death blow to the system. Act on the theory that the capitalist is not an autocrat in his factory, mill, or mine, or yard and the spell by which he rules is broken, his system is at end.

The very issue between Labor and Capital excludes the idea of “Arbitration.” It is an irrepressible conflict between manifest JUSTICE and red-handed CRIME.

The Socialist movement looks down with a smile upon Prof. BEMIS, his vagaries and his adoptive fathers; it hopes they may all soon be wiser, and may recover their sight.

A De Leon editorial transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the Official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.

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