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EDITORIAL

LO, A LIGHT.

By DANIEL DE LEON

INTO the Fall River, Mass., *Evening News* of the 20th instant, a correspondent found his way who in the modesty of his soul concealed his transcendent identity under the unassuming pen-name of "Citizen." The gentleman writes upon the then pending cut among the Fall River operatives. The economic theory that springs from his letter, already embalmed in cold type, deserves to be embalmed in nobler, more lasting material, so as to be saved, like old Egyptian mummies, for the wondering gaze of future gaping generations.

"Citizen" opens his letter with this passage:

"Every wage-earner must earn for his employer more than his wages, or he will not be employed long."

In the language of the immortal Artemus Ward, this man has "intellect into him." Unless the workingman produces more than he receives he will not be employed. The condition precedent for the employing of the worker, in other words, the condition precedent for him to live, is the compulsion he is under to be fleeced by the capitalist, thus enabling the capitalist to live without work. Such are the conditions created by the capitalist system.

From such premises, what conclusion can be expected other than that the perverse conditions must be uprooted that can bring on such results? What conclusion can be drawn and expected other than that capitalism is a breeder of a species of slavery more insidious and revolting than any hitherto known? The sane reader's expectations are screwed to the highest pitch. "Lo, a light from benighted, fakir-ridden Fall River!" one imagines hearing the sane reader exclaim. Unhappy he! Better for him he were insane. It would save him bumps. As he reads on, he feels muddled, and when he reaches the closing passage he feels as if he had fallen from a great height, sore all over. That passage is as follows:

“Labor often makes the sad mistake of considering its interests hostile to its employer. It never can thrive, unless its employer thrives.”

In other words,—and taking this maxim in connection with the first that the worker must produce for his employer more than his wages—, the body on which a parasite feeds and which the parasite sucks his living from, depends upon the parasite. It is not the parasite which thrives, accordingly as the body thrives that it parasites upon: no, it is the body that thrives accordingly as it is parasited upon. The fleas that fasten on a dog are life-givers to the dog, not the dog to the fleas. Only in the measure that the fleas thrive can the dog fatten. The welfare of the working class, whose substance the parasitic capitalist sucks up, depends upon the amount of blood sucked up from them!

Were it not a pity if such reasoning were to evaporate, and coming generations deprived the mirth to be derived from a study of the muddle-headism that capitalist schooling produces? As the Socialist Labor Party is rearing the social structure under which future generations will enjoy the life that is worthy of man, it justly also wishes to secure for all time matter for future amusement. Accordingly, the Party hereby embalms in the immortal columns of THE PEOPLE the “Citizen” light that has gone up from Fall River.

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