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EDITORIAL

THE CUBAN SPECTRE.

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There is a spectre rising over the horizon of the peace and tranquility of the nation. To those who have eyes to see, and who carry the necessary information wherewith to see, the despatches that are beginning to appear in the plutocratic press sound ominous.

It is, or should be, well known that the draft of the constitution submitted by its committee to the national convention of Cubans, now in session in Havana to frame a constitution for the country, amounts to a slap on both cheeks of the Administration in Washington. Through Governor-General Wood in Havana, through the Secretary of War, Elihu Root, both in Washington and during flying trips to Cuba, the “wishes” of the Administration have been long and clearly made known to the Cubans. These wishes were to the effect that the Cuban constitutional convention embody in their organic law the relations that were to exist between Cuba and the United States; in other and shorter words, the Administration wished that the sovereignty of Cuba should meet in constitutional convention only in order to abdicate its sovereignty; or, in still shorter words, the Administration wanted to own Cuba. Nor was the wish expressed in abstract terms only; very concrete points were mentioned: Cuba’s right of direct intercourse with foreign Governments, of raising loans, equipping armies, owning navies,—these and many other attributes of sovereignty our Administration “suggested” should be left with our Government.

But why should the Administration and its satraps “suggest?” Could they not order? Did they “suggest” anything to the Filipinos except to surrender at discretion? Why adopt a different course in Cuba? Why not keep possession of what already is in the Administration’s hands? The answer to this question explains the resonance of the slap administered to the Administration, the inconsiderateness of these Cubans, whom we may now soon expect to be termed bandits, rebels and savages.

When the war with Spain broke out, the Sugar, Tobacco, Standard Oil, Railroad, Mining and other interests that had backed up the revolution in Cuba, and that had

incited the war fever at home, were not yet brazen enough to come out with their full plan. Of this temporary bashfulness Senator Teller took mean advantage. A resolution, since known by his name, was adopted by Congress, disclaiming all intention of exercising sovereignty in Cuba, and placing the contemplated invasion of the island exclusively upon the ground of humanity. This certainly did not suit the humane capitalist coterie that was plunging the country into war; but they feared it would be impolitic to object; and, trusting to developments, possibly also to their “pocketfuls of convincing arguments,” they allowed the resolution to go through, and they “sailed into the war.”

With the close of war, this resolution began to gall our worthy humanitarians. The question then was how to get around it, and keep their clutches on Cuba. The device fallen upon was certainly clever. Could anyone raise the Teller Resolution as an objection if Cuba, of her own free will, were herself to decide to incorporate herself with us? Surely not! From that moment the efforts of the Administration were centered upon securing that “free will.” The constitutional convention was to perform the act. But it did not. It did just the other thing. It left undone the things that the Providence at Washington virtually directed it to do, and it did the things which the said Providence virtually directed it not to do. It constituted itself a SOVEREIGN NATION, without “ifs” or “buts.”

In view of these facts, the “despatches from Havana” are ominous. Reports of the “dissatisfaction of the business interests” on the island, of “a feeling of insecurity among the better classes,” of “serious notes of disapproval at the conduct of the Convention,”—these and more such expressions sound like the distant rumbling of an approaching storm.

Will the storm break out? The answer, humiliating as it is to make, depends, not upon the Working Class, the overwhelming majority of our people. Whether their bones will be sent to bleach in Cuban chaparrals, as they are now bleaching in the jungles of Luzon and Panay, depends wholly upon the degree of success that may accompany the heroic efforts of the Tagals to resist a foreign yoke.

Pitiful, humiliating is the plight of the American Working Class, ruled by the capitalist oppressor; their only chance to escape slaughter in Cuba is to be slaughtered in the Philippines. They pay the piper either way.

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