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EDITORIAL

WHO IS THE “RABBLE”?

By DANIEL DE LEON

When, two years ago, war was declared against Spain, that element of our ruling class that has the political power—the Republican capitalists—posed on the stage as apostles of “Humanity” and “Freedom.” They expressly declared that no purpose of conquest animated them, and they made a boast of their altruism. Cuba, they declared, had become a field of carnage: Humanity demanded that the bloodshed be stopped. Cuba, they declared, had attested its right to be free and its capacity to govern itself: Freedom demanded the independence of Cuba. Accordingly, as the apostles of both Humanity and Freedom, the capitalist ruling class unchained the dogs of war. The war ended with the complete rout of Spain. Now of a sudden the language of our ruling class with regard to Cuba has suddenly undergone a complete change. Now of a sudden, when the Cubans, in constituent convention assembled, have proceeded to frame their organic law of the island, along the lines of that independence that they were proclaimed to be entitled to, they are pronounced unfit for self-government; and the former “patriots” are now referred to as “the rabble now conspiring in Havana.”

What is it that has happened? Whence this Black Crook transformation scene?

Since the evacuation of Cuba by Spain, there has been a veritable exodus of American capitalist schemers to the island. Cuba and the Cuban workers smelled to these gentry like raw meat to an animal of prey. Contractors, franchise-grabbers, prospectors, operators,—a whole rabble rout of greedy schemers went over and started “operations.” The first difficulty that they encountered was the easy-going habits of the Cuban working people. They are not in the habit of hustling. Wage-slaves tho’ they be, their habits militate against their selling five dollars’ worth of life-tissue for one dollar. The intensity of labor, habitual to the workingman in the United States, is unknown to them.

In view of this, our American “promoters” soon discovered that these “lazy” Cubans had to be “civilized” and that the work of civilizing them could not be

entrusted to those of their race, not yet up to the standard of the American labor-skinning capitalist for capacity and “intelligence” to “drive.” Never enthusiastic over the idea of letting Cuba go, but willing to profit during the war by the prestige that their altruistic pose gave them, these capitalist cormorants have now no more use for altruism. Now it is dollars and cents: a government run by themselves that will back them up to the full extent in their labor-grinding efforts.

Who is the rabble? Assuredly not the confiding Cubans who took seriously the protestations of love and affection so common to their ears when the war broke out. Surely not the patriots who would shield their people from the ravages of the American capitalist cormorants.

When cannibalic capitalism looked for a pretext to invade China, it manufactured Chinese atrocities; when it looks for pretexts to continue the butchery of the Filipinos, it manufactures stories about Filipino savagery; and now when it looks for pretexts to break its own gratuitously given solemn pledge toward Cuba, it pronounces the Cuban representatives “a rabble, now conspiring in Havana.”

The term “rabble” may not apply to capitalists; a pack of hungry wolves in pursuit of prey is not a rabble.

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