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EDITORIAL

A CAPITALIST DREAM.

By DANIEL DE LEON

WHEN the capitalist class wishes to deliver what it considers “a crushing argument” against Socialism it designates the advocates of that social system as “dreamers” and “visionaries.” They do this despite the fact that they are daily being forced to concentrate industry in trusts in a manner predicted by the Socialists long before their “practical minds” gave it consideration. They are also resorting to the statistical method of determining the requirements of production under capitalism, a method that the “dreamers” advocated years in advance of its acceptance by “the matter of fact and far-seeing captains of industry.”

The truth of the matter is that the capitalists are the dreamers. They dream of “international peace,” while their commerce demands new markets and territorial expansion at a price that “staggeres humanity”—the price of bloody war. They dream of “arbitration between capital and labor,” while the excessive over-capitalization of their trusts and their schemes for the capture of foreign markets compel a greater exploitation of labor than ever before—an exploitation that manifests itself in intensified labor, increased cost of living, and an increased number of strikes and other labor troubles.

Not content with these dreams, the capitalist class has evolved another. It is the “Out-of-Doors” dream. The dreamer of this dream dreams thusly: “The time has come for us once more to go out of doors. . . . We must begin to live our lives out of doors far more than we have done, and the school must be out of doors as well as the family. Our cities will naturally expand instead of compressing themselves. The home life of both toilers and capitalists will creep out among the glens and among the hills.”

How beautiful; how poetical! When we read of Vanderbilt hiring special trains to convey himself and guests to Biltmore, when we read of James W. Hyde’s fast coach line to Lakewood, we see the capitalists, in our mind’s eye, “creeping out among the glens

and the hills”—while we also see the inhabitants of the tenement districts following suit—in our mind’s eye!

The trouble with the “out-of-doors” dream is its failure to consider what it is that compels us to live indoors. Under capitalism, the people leave the land to work in factories. Large numbers of persons formerly isolated or living in small groups are thus concentrated within a limited territory. The result is the city—the life indoors.

Now it stands to reason that if there is to be any life outdoors there must be a return to life on the land. Is such a thing possible under a system that is daily driving farmers from their mortgaged farms into the city? Is such a thing possible when the vast systems of transportation and tenement houses are daily adding to the congestion of cities, due to the fact that those who are employed in industry must live in close proximity to it? Is such a thing possible as long as capitalism, which compelled the exodus from the land and gave birth to the modern congested cities, exists?

Decidedly not! The capitalist class, who live off the plunder that capitalism yields, may creep out among the hills and the glens, by means of special trains and coach lines, but the vast majority of the workers will continue to live indoors, in the tenement house districts of large cities, amid tuberculosis and prostitution, and other plagues of capitalism.

The “Out-of-Doors” life is a capitalist dream.

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