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EDITORIAL

“AND THEN YOU AWOKE.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

WOODROW WILSON casts the horoscope of the Trust Question in this form:

“The Trusts belong to a very recent and very sophisticated age, when men knew what they wanted and knew how to get it by favor of the Government. It is another chapter in the natural history of power and of ‘governing classes.’ The next chapter will set us free again. There will be no flavor of tragedy in it. It will be a chapter of readjustment, not of pain and rough disturbance. It will witness a turning back from what is abnormal to what is normal. It will see a restoration of laws of trade, which are the laws of competition and of unhampered opportunity, under which men of every sort are set free and encouraged to enrich the nation.”

Voltaire has a story about a philosopher who tells a friend how he plans to adjust the world. The plan is disclosed in all its details. These are mechanically imperfect, but the imperfections are each time bridged over by some occult process, or other. In that way our philosopher rattled on until he reached either the end of his explanation, or the end of his breath. When he finally stopped the friend said:

“And then you awoke.”

When in this year of grace, 1912 A.D., one hears an exposition of competition calmly pronounced “normal”; when one hears the destructive and anarchic, the planless and wasteful operations of the competitive struggle coolly designated as the “laws of trade”; when one hears the concentration of productive forces, which render possible a bountiful store of wealth with the need of no more effort than healthy exercise, stigmatized as “abnormal”; when one hears an exposition of the “restoration” of “unhampered opportunity,” not by freeing the Trust of its present social incubus of private ownership, but by the “restoration” of competition which means the annulment of all the blessings that are potential with concentration, or

the Trust;—when one hears such a plan developed in all its socio-mechanical imperfection and absurdity, and is assured that therein lies freedom for “men of every sort,” then, when the demonstration is through, there is just one thought that leaps to the mind, and, from the mind to the lips of the listener—

“And then you awoke!”

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