

*Daniel De Leon*

## **Editorial: No Woolgathering!**

The despatches announce that Messrs. Hurd and Harper are now in Washington to appeal before the United States Supreme Court from the Ricks-Taft decisions at Toledo, rendered against the freedom of labor to quit work; the despatches further announce that, should the Supreme Court sustain the Court below, then the appeal will be carried to Congress, i.e., pressure will be exercised upon Congress to change the law, and it is hinted that, if this pressure in, and appeal to, Congress should fail, then the appeal will be carried to, and the pressure exercised at, the hustings.

The plan of campaign thus outlined by these dapper lawyers will in the end bring them face to face with the head fountains of the Labor Movement.

The United States Supreme Court will not reverse the decision of the lower Court; Congress may monkey with, but will not materially change the law. Fees-pocketing lawyers may affect to have to make their own experience; but we are not biased in that way, and may as well come down to hard pan, and consider now what the outcome will be.

The final appeal must be to the people; it is at the hustings that the Ricks-Taft decisions will have to be finally passed upon. What are the prospects before that Supreme tribunal?

The facts and the law in the case are:

1. Governments and the emanations from them—laws—are instituted among men to secure to these the rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness; these governments derive

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their just powers from the consent of the governed; whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.

2. Without the ownership of his instruments of production, man is enslaved to those who happen to own such instruments. The people of this country started a hundred and odd years ago their independent political career as free men because they held in their own hands their own instruments of labor. Since then the economic development has revolutionized the pristine economic condition. Owing to perfected machinery and concentration of capital, the tools of production have slipped through the fingers of the masses and have gathered in the hands of a few—the Capitalists. The former system was one of small, individual, production; the present system is one of large, co-operative, social production. The small producer can not hold his own in competition with the large concern; he goes down, and becomes a wage-slave. Although he is the sole producer of all wealth, the idle stock-holding capitalist sponges it all out of him. The pauperism and economic dependence bred by such a system saps all political freedom. To-day the people, the toiling class, are enslaved to a capitalist oligarchy. Political freedom has become a mockery. There can be none such without economic freedom.

3. The system of government under which we live has, accordingly, become destructive of the ends to secure which it was instituted, and, accordingly, it is the people's right and duty to alter and abolish it, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form as will effect their happiness. As there is no political freedom possible with economic slavery, and as economic freedom is predicated upon the ownership by the worker of his instruments of production, these instruments must be restored to him. As, however, between the time when these instruments slipped through his

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fingers to this, they have assumed such gigantic proportions that no one man can operate them alone, but they require the co-operative labor of the whole commonwealth, they can not be put into the hands of each individual, but must be put into the hands of the whole commonwealth to be owned by it, used and operated collectively. The people must own collectively their machinery of production. It is they who, anyhow, brought it forth; to them it belongs. In the words of Franklin, “private property is a creature of society, and is subject to the calls of that society, whenever its necessities shall require, even to its last farthing.”

4—The Ricks-Taft decision is but the strict logical outcome of the present system of capitalist domination; under it the working masses have no rights; they are chattels, not free men. Consequently, that decision is only one of the many manifestations of the present freedom-subverting system; and consequently, it alone cannot come up on appeal before the people with any chance of being reversed. To decide it correctly, to reverse it, it must come up together with all the Paxson, White, Ewing, Barrett, Billings and other decisions; it must come up and be arraigned at one bar, at one and the same time with the Federal Executive’s ordering of the militia to Coeur d’Alene; the military outrages at Homestead, Buffalo, Tennessee, Washington, etc.; the policemen’s clubbing bees in New York and all our great cities. In other words, it must come up as the deeds of the WHOLE Capitalist Class, arraigned at the bar of the whole Working Class, i.e., of the people.

5—Finally, and as a result of the above, the Taft-Ricks decision cannot be reversed at the hustings if it comes up as a solitary and private question, that interests especially only one section of the working class, or in which the other sections are only theoretically interested. It can not gather the forces requisite to conquer Congress, unless the whole fundamental issue is brought up in which the whole working class is interested, and which will rank the whole working class as one solid body at the polls against it, determined to do their duty

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and exercise their rights to abolish the present system of slavery and substitute it with the Co-operative Commonwealth.

Such a course may seem “theoretical” to the “practical” fraternity of visionaries. Nevertheless, any other is no better than star-gazing and wool-gathering!

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