

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 4, NO. 310.

NEW YORK, THURSDAY, MAY 5, 1904.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

THE OUTLOOK FOR SOCIALISM.

By DANIEL DE LEON

IN the midst of all the vagaries of thought expended on Socialism, both by its friends and its foes, none appear so futile and out of keeping with present day environments as those predicting its hopelessness or discountenancing its spread and growth. At no period of American history have so many bright minds become interested in the problems directly affecting Socialism; and at no time in American history have so many American workingmen and working women consciously realized the importance of the part their class is playing in the struggle between capital and labor—which is the pivot around which Socialism swings—as at present. This fact is best made clear in the changes of conditions and thought of the past two decades of American development.

Two decades ago, scientific Socialism was largely regarded as an academic question, and discussed as such in the so-called halls of learning and the more substantial newspapers. Though it was about this time that the first of the trusts, the Standard Oil and the Sugar trusts, were launched, the Marxian theory of concentrated industry was then regarded as a possibility only after hundreds of years of evolution. To-day scientific Socialism is a vital topic, with which politicians, statesmen, manufacturers and philanthropists, aided by the press and clergy, are compelled to deal most frequently. To-day, so great has been the trend toward combination and concentration within the past few years that non-Socialists feel constrained to point out that it is precipitating society headlong into Socialism, while the trusts are held to be the forerunners of the latter.

Two decades ago, to teach the class struggle was difficult. The conflict between the capitalist and the working class was then sporadic and limited. Its best illustration was the Pittsburg railroad riots, with their “lead diet” for workmen. To-day this conflict is universal and continuous, drawing ever greater numbers into its

vortex and forever changing the psychology of those taking part in it in a manner detrimental to capitalism. To-day, the worker finds it hard to remember the long list of industrial wars extending from Hocking Valley, Pullman and Homestead down to Colorado. To-day, to teach the class struggle is not difficult, excepting in the choice of the most typical illustration from the abundance of evidence on hand.

With industrial evolution tending rapidly toward Socialism, with the workers impelled toward it by the growth of trusts and the extensive strikes which accompany that growth, the outlook for Socialism is now better than it ever was. When it is considered that the Utopian Socialism which so prominently characterized the eighties of the last century has almost entirely disappeared, and a class-conscious movement, like the Socialist Labor Party, has taken its place, this fact becomes more pronounced. There can be no doubt in the mind of the Socialist who looks backward that, in traversing those two decades, capitalist development has piled up those factors whose accretion will cause the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of Socialism.

Socialism, oft proclaimed dead, was never more alive and hopeful than at the present time.

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

Uploaded June 2007

slpns@igc.org