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EDITORIAL

## WOE TO THE SKEPTIC!

By DANIEL DE LEON

**T**HE *Westminster*, a Presbyterian church paper of Philadelphia, devotes an editorial to modern conditions. Its premises are singularly correct. It recognizes that present evils are “not sporadic, but endemic”. It realizes that the whole social fabric is diseased, politically and economically. It is clear upon the fact that “local remedies” will not avail, “nor the punishment of individuals”. It wisely looks to history for guidance, and it judiciously strikes the path that should lead out of the wilderness. “As feudalism”, it says, “was the outcome of certain conditions, and slavery of others, and as both could be cured ONLY BY A REFORMATION OF THE ENTIRE SITUATION, SO TO-DAY”. The paper, accordingly, is awake to the fact that nothing short of the social revolution—for, what else than a social revolution can be meant by “a reformation of the entire situation”?—will do the present job. It looks for and wonders what the great new principle shall be “on which the new society shall be formed”. It quotes Socialism, and then—visibly shaking off its skirts the burning embers that the volcanic eruption of capitalism is showering upon it, and panting hard for breath in the suffocating atmosphere of incandescent lava—it clings to its familiar haunts, mistrustful of the Socialist formula, which to accept it declares itself “too skeptical.”—Not material is the difference between the reasoning and conclusion of *The Westminster*, and the reasoning and conclusion of the woman, whom the matchless bravery of a soldier rescued a few days ago at Bosco Trecasse from among the ruins of her house that the ashes from Vesuvius had buried her under. She also recognized, as her own story runs, that, what with the ashes that were pouring down, the sulphur that impregnated the atmosphere, above all, the tremor of the soil under her, the evil was not transitory; between sighs, as her broken limbs were being set, and mindful of the history of Vesuvius, she indicated she knew she would

have to “pull up stakes” and move elsewhere for the rest of her life. But she too was still “too skeptical”. Dear associations clung around her old home, and increased her “skepticism”; she had twice started to run away, but lingering visions of this nick-nack and then of that brought her back, until finally she was overcome.

The volcano of capitalist society speaks a language that is unmistakable. The social system, that recognizes the private ownership of the land on and the tools with which to produce the necessities of civilized life, fatedly rips society into two main conflicting classes—a property-holding (capitalist) class that does no work, and a toolless (working) class that does all the labor, physical and mental. From the crater, forced open by such volcanic forces below, are belched out the flames, scoriae, and death-dealing gases, on the one hand, of a pauperized, plundered, tyrannized mass, whose life and limbs are sacrificed in factories, mines and yards, whose families are torn apart, whose minds are stunted, and, on the other, of an idle, tyrannizing class whose God is the \$, whose flag is the black flag of the pirate, and whose morality is the morality of the dive. From that crater is spewed the black smoke of Western Mine Owners’ Association conspiracies with perjured witnesses and state officials against the lives of honorable workingmen; from that crater are vomited the scalding waters of embezzlements by directors of insurance companies, of perjured returns by gas companies, of lawlessness by railroad companies, of brutal applause of the slaughter of women and children by a Roosevelt; from that crater are puked the scoriae of the false weights in the mental balances dealt in by pulpits, professors and politicians; from that crater is breathed the greenish curling smoke of sulphur of the theory that the survival of the fittest means the upholding of a social system where only the vilest reptile can thrive. Like the molten stone, which advanced like a monster serpent of fire, turning its head to the right and to the left, as a snake does, but kept its general direction towards Bosco Trecasse, with its accompanying canopy of smoke overhead and accompanying atmosphere of suffocating sulphur, till it struck and overwhelmed the fated town—so does the molten lava of capitalism steadily, fatedly wend its way to the annihilation of civilization—unless its cause is stopped.

Woe to the “skeptic” who lingers and hopes. Who has eyes and does not see, ears and does not hear. It was not, it should not be, for naught that the cautious

words—“rather bear those ills we have, than fly to others we know not of”—were put by the great Seer into the mouth of a “skeptical”, vacillating youth, who, despite cumulating evidence, still temporized, until the enterprise of great moment, its current turned awry, lost the name of action, and he was buried under the crash of his whole house.

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