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EDITORIAL

INDEPENDENCE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

TO-DAY, Memorial Day, the annual pageant will celebrate the deeds of those who fought and died that this country and its institutions—chiefest among these the institution of liberty—might live.

This yearly procession is but another outgrowth of the somewhat classic rumor that at a certain period of the country's history the population took in the spirit of freedom with the very air it breathed. Confiding historians have even recorded the name of the British commander who is said to have given expression to some such sentiment directly upon receiving a stinging rebuke from a Boston schoolboy. Interested travellers to these shores from overseas have been wont to remark that if there was one thing to make a proud and peerless American citizen throw out his chest and beam down condescendingly upon the rest of the universe, it was some reference to his freedom, his liberty, his independence.

This being thusly, it is clear that the crying need of America at this period of her national existence is a Signor Guglielmo Ferrero of her own, to explode a fanciful but tenacious myth. On all hands it is borne out that this supposed spirit of liberty is purest legend.

A strike is on at the Rockaway (N.Y.) Rolling mill. For some time, report says, the superintendent of the mill was hostile toward George Job, the employes' spokesman, "because of his independence."

By no means the least valuable result of the recent Pittsburg survey was its putting the kibosh on the gentlefolks who are continually decrying the workingman because he "doesn't stick together." The survey showed that every attempt at sticking together, at organizing, or even at petitioning for better conditions, was met with threats and dismissals. Independence was not wanted.

He who seeks can multiply the instances to his own satisfaction. Independence

is taboo with the master class of the nation. What they want, and are with might and main striving to produce, is a totally dependent, helpless, and abject class of working cattle, with no will or hopes of their own, or no strength to use in any but its overlords' work.

All of which indubitably gives the lie to the myth of the one-time American love of independence. Or—can it be?—was this love of independence once real, and now fallen to this?

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