

The People.

VOL. V, NO. 41

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, JANUARY 5, 1896

PRICE 3 CENTS

SECOND EDITORIAL

'Nations'

By DANIEL DE LEON

“National dignity” is one of the most favored phrases in the capitalist’s mouth, and yet there is none of the many hollow phrases he uses that he himself so persistently exposes to mockery. The present war craze illustrates the point.

The capitalists of this country are now fairly in one another’s hair on the subject. One set is spoiling for war, the other is mortally afraid of it. All those who think a war will benefit them are raking up bellicose quotations, songs and precedents to prove that the “nation’s” dignity could not survive peace. On the other hand, all those whose business war would destroy are equally industrious in digging up Arcadian quotations, songs and precedents to demonstrate that the “nation’s” dignity will certainly be blasted by war.

The upshot of this performance is that there is no such thing, there can be no such thing, as a “nation” under the dignity and honor stifling atmosphere of capitalism. A nation implies a union of human beings moved by central motives and guided by one central impulse. Can capitalism rear such a bond? Capitalism means every individual’s hand raised against all others; its motto is: “One man’s misfortune is another man’s chance”; the survival of the fittest ruffian or of the pappiest dough-face is its ideal. A social system like that can never present a united front; and, as immorality is its basic principle, it has no dignity to preserve.

The Socialists look on with complacency at the sight which our rulers are treating us to, and gather new inspiration to wipe out the beastly order of capitalist nationalities.

[Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.](#)

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