

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 2, NO. 327.

NEW YORK, FRIDAY, MAY 23, 1902.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

THE *CATHOLIC UNION AND TIMES* CONCLUSION.

By DANIEL DE LEON

SOCIALISTS favor the collective or social ownership of capital because it is social or collective in character. They would have ownership and character one and the same, not merely as a matter of logic, but of justice, demanded by social necessity.

At the beginning of capitalism small production by hand in isolated shops for personal and local consumption was the rule. The producer was generally his own master. The product of his toil belonged to him, to be consumed by him or his feudal lord, and only offered for sale by him when in excess of their immediate wants. The modern workingman was then unknown.

To-day all this is changed. Industry is concentrated into large shops producing not for personal and local consumption, but for sale and foreign markets. Production is no longer isolated and individual; but co-operative and social. Thousands upon thousands of men are united through sub-division of labor in the production of human necessities, while one branch of industry is inter-dependent upon the other: the factories being, for instance, dependent upon the mines, and vice versa, through all lines of industry. Social institutions like the legislature, the judiciary, the army and the navy, protect and promote the development and expansion of this production.

This industrial revolution has its origin in the slow, steady, social evolution of invention and the mechanical wonders of the age, creating tools that are no longer individual in their management, use and results. It has triumphed over small production because it is economically superior, necessitating less average social labor time and reducing exchange values to the competitive destruction of small production. Its methods, organization, technique, management, all that appertains to it, are the results of much experiment participated in by thousands, under the pressure of necessity and

the constant desire for progress. It did not spring fully developed out of the head of a capitalist genius, but out of social travail and pain.

Though we now have social production we still have to a great degree individual ownership. Instead of as formerly the producer being the master and receiving all of his product, he is the slave receiving but part of it. In his place there has arisen a class known as the capitalist class. This class, composed of individuals owning and controlling capital, formerly took part in production as managers and superintendents, functions now undertaken by paid employes: specialists, scientists, inventors, etc., etc. They consequently perform no useful service, yet this class takes all the products of modern labor and industry, giving back in the form of wages such portion of it as the law of supply and demand compels. The remainder they appropriate in the shape of surplus value or profits, to themselves. In other words, they rob the working class of the difference between the wages they receive and the total value of their product.

Out of the surplus thus stolen the capitalist class has been enabled to secure control of capital and complete its domination of the working class. Separated from the instruments of production, which he formerly owned, the working man has also become separated from his product, so that to-day he is not only robbed but enslaved. The United States census for 1890, as analyzed by Lucien Sanial, shows that the great working class of this country, now acclaimed the most energetic, efficient and thrifty on the face of the earth, then representing 55 per cent. of the population possessed but 4.21 per cent. of the total wealth. The capitalist class numbering but 1.41 per cent. of the population possessed, however, 64.37 per cent. of the wealth. To-day they have absolute control of the middle class; and were a like analysis of classes and wealth made of the census of 1900, it would no doubt show similar results. This opinion is justified by the statement of Prof. Sumner, in a recent article in the *Independent* defending the concentration of wealth. Said he, "In our time joint stock companies, which are in form republican, are drifting over into oligarchies or monarchies, because one or a few get greater efficiency of control and vigor of administration." They also get greater quantities of wealth at the expense of the minority stockholder.

As to the enslavement of modern production, Chas. M. Schwab has said, "It is true that the new methods have a growing tendency to suppress individuality"—(N.Y.

Commercial, Jan. 27, 1902.) A word to the wise is sufficient.

Through this robbery and enslavement of labor there has also arisen an underconsumption on the part of the working class, which cannot buy back the equivalent of what it produces. This underconsumption produces overproduction, panics, crises and the untold social suffering consequent upon them when not averted. When averted, society simply jumps out of the fire into the frying pan of commercial expansion, with its bloody territorial conquests and brutalizing wars. Foreign markets are developed and made self-producing, so that capitalist society faces two alternatives: international bankruptcy for lack of outlets or international war for such markets as may be developed in the future.

The era of consolidation and trustification has just begun. "The public ownership of national monopolies" will not prevent it; as all industries are but embryonic monopolies. One might just as well talk of a natural man and an unnatural boy; the first is but the development of the latter.

Since the era of consolidation and trustification has but begun we may look for a greater exploitation of labor, a greater crushing out of the middle class, and a greater overproduction with all the dreadful consequences that it implies.

The Socialist would end all this by making capital social in ownership as well as character. He would utilize the great blessings of social production in the form of increased efficiency and economy. He would give to the laborer what he produces; and justice, together with social necessity, demands. He would thus obviate underconsumption, overproduction, crises and war. He would make our economic conform to our theory of politics and extend the democratic idea to industry. He would eliminate a lop-sided, immoral individualism by a well-rounded fraternalism, or Capitalism by Socialism.

It is this which the *Catholic Union and Times*, in a lecture which it commends, characterizes as "criminally immoral" and "economically unsound." To restore to the producer that of which he is robbed is immoral then? To continue the evolution of that system of production which experience has proven best, with such modifications as will obviate its defects, is economic unsoundness, then? Would the *Catholic Union and Times* recognize anything moral and economically sound when it saw it? Considering

the ignorance and proneness to falsification, which we exposed in previous editorials, we don't think it would. The trouble with the *Catholic Union and Times* is that it is immoral and unsound. Any man of intelligence who defends the capitalist system, cannot fail to be otherwise. To be moral and sound is a Socialist not a capitalist virtue.

We have done for the present with the *Catholic Union and Times*.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded September 2006