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EDITORIAL

THE CENSORSHIP.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE Swedish proletariat, now on strike for living conditions, and invoking the support of their fellow proletarians of the world, are discovering that there is a press censorship in their country, “as rigid as in Russia.” They should add: “and as rigid as in America.”

In the matter of the press censorship an additional illustration is furnished of the contrast between semi-feudal Europe and raw-boned American capitalism. In semi-feudal Europe the blunt ways of feudalism still prevail in many respects, and have been inherited by the present capitalist lord. In Russia, for instance, the proletarian is roughly manufactured by being physically torn from the land that he tilled; in America he is “smoked out” like Indians “smoke out” badgers, and like the white man “smokes out” our “wards, the Indians.” In Europe generally, the workingman is bluntly disfranchised, by bluntly expressed electoral laws that establish a property qualification; here in America His Shoddyship the capitalist seeks to reach the same end by devious ways. ’Tis so also with the “liberty of the press.”

What is the censorship? what its purpose?

The purpose of a censorship is to keep the masses in ignorance of things that are, and that they should know. Where this practice exists there is a censorship.

How is the thing done in Europe?—bluntly, frankly, or in various degrees of frankness and bluntness. Everybody knows it. The same thing is done here in America; but how?—under cover of “No censorship!” Here the thing is done by means of “Press Agencies.” Capitalist concerns organize these, “for the promotion of speedy intelligence.” The “Press Agency” is under capitalist supervision, and, by means of the Agency, deliberately false news is scattered throughout the country. The myriad papers of the land publish the bogus stuff. As “they all say so” the

appearance is given of each paper confirming the others. In fact, each but repeats the bogusness that radiates from ONE CENTER—the Agency. Obviously, there is no practical difference between suppressing intelligence, as is done in Europe, and stuffing the masses with false information. 'Tis the censorship.

The fact is now experienced in the matter of the Swedish strike. It does not suit the ruling class of Sweden that the fact of the strike's continuance and vigor be known. Hence they bluntly censor the reports thereon. It suits the American ruling class none the better to have the facts of the Swedish strike known by the American proletariat. These phenomena of mammoth strikes in Europe are recurring too frequently of late, and at too short intervals—one day in France, the next in Spain, now in Sweden. The phenomenon may wake up our own workers, now narcotized by Gompersism. Hence the Agency is scattering the bogus news that the strike is a fiasco.

There is a censorship in America, as in Russia,—only much more insidious.

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