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FIRST EDITORIAL

Expanding With a Vengeance.

By DANIEL DE LEON

Hawaii is barely brought within our boundaries when strange news comes from there. Several workingmen, a number of boys among them, brought from Siberia to work on the Oahu plantations, having struck, were promptly sentenced to imprisonment, most of them to two years.

In the old United States, that was and is not quite the manner of treating strikers. But the difference is simply an “expansion” of the principle in practice here, only “expanded” there to suit conditions.

Here, when workingmen strike, all that has to be done by the Demo-Republican capitalists in power is to keep the path clear for the so-called “scab” to walk in and take the places of the men on strike. Capitalism has here developed so far that a large army of unemployed—a necessary institution for comfortable capitalist life—is in existence. This army of the unemployed (hungry and needy), is ever ready to flow into the vacuum created by a strike; and, if access to the vacuum is impeded by “pickets,” there are the police, the militia, the Courts and, if need be, the Federal military, to sweep the impediment aside. Sentences of imprisonment here are, accordingly, not for the offence of “striking,” or refusing to work, but for that of “interfering with the freedom of others to secure work.”

It is otherwise in Hawaii. There the blessings of capitalism, pure and undiluted, are not yet at large. An unemployed class is not yet one of the sights of Hawaii. A strike there must, therefore, necessarily be treated differently. The theory on which workingmen are here sent to jail at strikes must be “expanded” to meet the requirements of the capitalist class. Sentence of imprisonment is, accordingly, pronounced there when one chooses to exercise the freedom of not working, i.e., of not allowing himself to be plucked.

While our capitalist class is thus “expanding” the sphere of its utility it will be well for our working class to contemplate carefully what is now going on in Hawaii, and draw the conclusions from the writings on the wall.

With many a workingman at home, the “expansion” theory of our territory was, is sympathetic. They argue justly that the labor market is overstocked; misled, however, by false teachings, they do not look for the cure of the evil where the cure is to be found and seek to overthrow this capitalist system that produces the unemployed; they look for palliatives; they have been told that “expansion” will afford an outlet to the surplus labor in the country; and they have favored expansion accordingly. The Hawaiian incident should be promptly taken to heart. It teaches:

1. The unemployed who move into the “expanded” territory will be treated as chattel slaves—until there be a surplus of labor there too;

2. In view of that, our unemployed are not likely to flock to the “expanded” territory; they will let others go through the ordeal—to the detriment of the expected easing up of the labor market at home; and

3. If the flow of labor from here into the “expanded” territory is very strong, the result would be to raise in the “expanded territory the conditions now prevalent here and from which our working people try to escape, and to place us here in the condition that the now “expanded” territory is in, to wit, with a labor market so slimily stocked that a strike can not be met by simply clearing the way for the scab, but must be met, as it is now met in Hawaii, by imprisoning the striker.

There is no such thing as dodging the fist of Capitalism; the bully can be met only by standing up boldly against him wherever his obscene bulk is raised, and knocking him down bodily.

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

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