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EDITORIAL

AN IMPOSSIBLE FEAT.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE new Chinese Minister to the United States—Chen Tung Liang Cheng—has arrived in the country. He brings with him a large suite of secretaries, diplomats and legation attaches, besides nine servants. But huge as this train is, huger still is the load of the Minister's mission. Chen Tung Liang Cheng is loaded down with no less a mission than "to overcome the existing prejudice against his countrymen." No human sinews can stand such a load.

Is it that the Chinaman is a barbarian, an incorrigible reprobate, an inherent social leper, whom to object to is a noble "prejudice"? Indeed, not! The Chinaman answers favorably to the general tests of civilization: he is literate, he is intelligent, he is industrious. Is it, then, the American who is at fault? Is he a petrified and ossified nativist, out-chauvining the chauvin? Neither is that true: the American is hospitable to a fault; himself the product of no one race, he has a human feeling for all. Why, then, should the mission of Chen Tung Liang Cheng to overcome the present and undoubted hatred entertained for his countrymen be too huge a mission for human shoulders?

Fully 50 per cent. of the population of the land ten years of age and over are merchandise on the shelves of the labor-market. The relative and the absolute percentage is steadily on the increase. The more overstocked the labor-market, all the lower are wages, and all the more precarious the jobs. Improved machinery held in private hands, sufficiently raises the supply of labor above the demand. By his mere appearance, the Chinaman increases the supply. This fact does not tend to raise a prejudice in his favor. The circumstance, however, that he does more than merely raise the supply, that he comes with so low a standard of living that he lowers the price of labor even below the level that the domestic over-production of labor lowers it,—that circumstance raises, not a prejudice, but a positive dislike for him.

True enough, if domestic labor had already risen to the height of the Socialist Republic, the labor-market would not be there. That social ulcer being absent, the Chinaman in America could not effect the evil he now effects. There would then be no “prejudice” to combat. But Minister Chen Tung Liang Cheng is not supposed to be a Socialist. He represents no such enlightened principle. As far as he represents any social principle at all, it is that of capitalism. Accordingly he represents the theory of an ever more heavily overstocked labor market. The foreign minister, who represents such a thing, bites off more than he can chew when he tries to remove the “prejudice” entertained for his countrymen who help to overstock the domestic labor market, and, by reason of their low standard of living, add increase of momentum to the decline of wages.

Minister Chen Tung Liang Cheng’s job is that of a man trying to raise himself by his own boot-straps.

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