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EDITORIAL

THE FOOLISHNESS OF THE AMERICANS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

JAMES J. Hill, President of the Great Northern Railroad, is admittedly one of the few far-sighted capitalists of this country. He was the first to warn against the approach of the panic of 1903. He also gave evidence of prevision in his early recognition of the immense possibilities of Oriental trade. Discussing the latter at Seattle, Wash., on Sept. 30, he said:

“The people who are banking on Oriental trade are bound to be disappointed. The United States cannot compete with foreign countries until we can manufacture products at a lower cost, which means cheaper labor.”

He said further:

“The American people are fools and are vaingloriously patting themselves on the back over the so-called American invasion of European and Oriental markets, while the other countries, saying nothing, have practically monopolized the trades.”



JAMES J. HILL (1838-1916)

Such language is full of serious import and truth to the working class. The capitalist class have banked upon the expansion of both the Oriental and European trades to stimulate industry in this country. The changes that will arise from any failure on their part to capture foreign markets, will lead to a crisis, on one hand, or a readjustment of conditions in this country to meet the foreign situation, on the other. With the factories of this country continually turning out more products than are consumed, the need of foreign markets grows, instead of diminishes. Yet, Hill's language makes it plain that, instead of growing, these outlets are being diminished

by the successful competition of those very countries whom the capitalist class of this country are supposed to have competitively subdued, for once and for all time. The inevitable result of such a condition can only be “over-production” and panic, with their widespread unemployment and working class suffering, both of which Rockefeller has predicted for the very near future. Or this calamity may be partly averted by a general reduction of wages, a greater introduction of labor-displacing machinery, intensification of labor, and concentration of capital. It is low wages, and more machinery, intensification, and concentration, a la America, that enables the old world to wrest the palm of victory from the new. The Americanization of Europe will now have to give way to the Europeanization of America. World competition will force it. With the working class on the horns of this dilemma, of either panic or readjustment, the import and truth of Hill’s words become evident.

Verily, verily, “the American people are fools.” They suffer the pangs and outrages of capitalism, when, by removing the system of wage exploitation upon which it is based, and substituting therefor a system guaranteeing to them the full product of their toil, they could buy back all that they produce, and thus avert the need of foreign markets, with all that thereby hangs.

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

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