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EDITORIAL

CONVERSATION NO. 5.

By DANIEL DE LEON

[Under this head will be reproduced a series of conversations that were either listened to or partaken in by the editor of *The People* in the company of the capitalist passengers, whom he met in the Pullmans in the course of his recent extensive tour in the West.]

AS may be supposed, the subject of the rumpus about the Japanese could not fail to turn up in the Pullman conversations, on the trains running through California. Indeed, frequently did the topic turn up. But the observations were scrappy, as a rule. On the way to San Francisco, however, in the course of the last day of March the Pullmanites were given a lecture upon the subject. At about noon, a remarkably self-satisfied-looking bourgeois boarded the train. According to the gentleman's own autobiography, he was a fruit raiser employing fifty hands. There are youths who "know it all." This gentleman was a youth no longer. He was well in the forties. But he had "succeeded" in business. Success in business was, to his mind, evidence of fitness to discuss any problem. He tackled the Japanese problem. No sooner was he comfortably seated, cigar in mouth, than he took the floor and kept it. The following was the substance of his address:

"This is a serious problem. This Jap question is a broad question. I read what is said in them fool papers. They don't know what they are talking about. I'll tell ye what is what in a nut-shell. This country [meaning California] would go to ruin without the Japs. [Signs of astonishment.] Just so;—to ruin. I'll tell ye what there is in all this anti-Jap row. I believe a man is entitled to fair wages. He should get paid for what he does. That's political economy. I've read all the books on that. That's what they teach. I say so too—pay a man for what he does. I also say a man has a right to refuse to work for less than fair wages. I'll refuse to sell my truck under the

market price. I say, 'Live and let live.' That's political economy. The workingman has a right to refuse to work for underpay.—But gentlemen—mind ye now—this is the rub—if you are posted on political economy you will see the point as clear as I do—when American workingmen band themselves like a band of highwaymen to force up prices—'force up prices,' I say—that's what political economy calls it—to force up prices, then he does a thing that will upset this country—then he threatens the welfare of California. Now, then, there is your Jap. He is willing to work for fair wages. That's political economy. And I say, if the American workingman is ready to destroy this country, then political economy declares that it is time we DO SOMETHING. We must let the Jap in to save the country.”

In the course of this discourse, here considerably condensed, the sermonizer on political economy had dropped a short sentence or two in Spanish. The Editor of *The People*, using the information conveyed by the California Labor Bureau, asked the gentleman in the Spanish language “But the Japs, I hear, are ‘merciless’ against the employer; are they not, therefore, a greater danger than the American workingman?” The answer from the political economist and universal savant came quick as a flash: “Oh, you are a Mexican! You Mexicans have the peons. In Mexico the Jap is not needed. We need him here.”

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