

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. I, NO. 46.

NEW YORK, WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 15, 1900.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

BREAD AND CIRCUSES.

By DANIEL DE LEON

DURING the days of the Empire of Rome the proletariat was kept quiet by great shows and the distribution of bread, and their cry was “panem et circenses” or “give us bread and circuses.” The emperor that gave them the largest show and most bread was the best emperor.

The proletarians of those days were the free men of Rome, who, because born free, could not work, but were deprived of property, absolute beggars, more despicable than the slaves. Those from whom they expected the shows and food were the aristocracy of Rome, who, being born free, did not work, but who owned all the world. The cry “panem et circenses” has come down the ages with the stigma of degradation, hopeless and awful attached to it. It was the cry of humans sunk to the level of the dog, aye, below that. That cry was the cry of the most debauched class the world has ever known. In all ages since Rome fell it has been the rallying cry of the slums.

The last issue of the *Bricklayer and Mason* contains an editorial with the head “Panem et Circenses,” which is a plea for the capitalists to give more circuses and to allow the proletariat of today time in which to enjoy them; also to give more bread.

Many things have been said of the labor faker which he has claimed has been “too harsh,” but nothing equaling his own words has been uttered in his condemnation. Time and again it has been pointed out that the influence of the faker was degrading, and is more evidence needed than the editorial of the *Bricklayer and Mason*?

The proletariat of today is not the proletariat of Rome; they were drones, and useless; we of today are workers and on our shoulders rests the world. The proletariat of Rome were spongers upon the spongers of slaves; we of today are the sponged. The proletariat of Rome had no right to exist any more than has the louse the right to exist; we of today are the only ones with a clear title to existence--we produce the food we eat.

The proletariat of Rome did not make the amphitheaters, nor did they capture

the beasts, engage in the performance or work out the details of the shows; neither did they produce the bread--they were sweated out of the slave, and the portion given the proletariat was as the garbage remaining from an Astor ball. We of today build the show places, perform in the plays, work out the details thereof and produce the bread. Must we then beg for a little of it as did the louse proletariat of Rome?

When the editor (?) wrote the article referred to he gave away the secret of the pure and simple union. It is organized to degrade, to make of a race of men a breed of lice. From the mouth of the pure and simpler comes his own condemnation.

Instead of pointing out, in language clear and convincing, the fact that the proletariat of today can only be degraded by accepting as an alms that which is its by right; instead of showing that labor produces all--including the circus and the bread--the faker tries his best to earn his dirty money, by meekly insisting on the working class accepting the circus and bread of the debauched and degenerate proletariat of Rome as a good gift from the robber class of today.

Branded heretofore by others, the faker now deliberately brands himself as an agent of the capitalist class in the degradation of the worker.

But Moffat and his like will find their attempts at degradation of no avail. The proletarian of Rome felt and knew he was a parasite, coward and degenerate: the proletariat of today is coming to know itself for what it is--a race of men who are infested with a mass of parasites, including the labor faker, and is making up its mind to take a bath in the waters of the Socialist Republic and thus rid itself forever of all forms of lice.

The knowledge of his uselessness and degradation led the proletarian of Rome to accept alms; the knowledge of his usefulness, strength and virility will lead the proletarian of today to smash, with the Arm and Hammer ballot of the Socialist Labor Party, the power of the capitalist class to rob him and then insult him with an offer of "bread and circuses," provided he keep quiet.

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

Uploaded February 2006