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EDITORIAL

NORDAU AND IMPERIALISM.

By DANIEL DE LEON

MAX Nordau, the well-known social philosopher, in an interview just published, expresses great distress over the growth of imperialism in the United States. He declares imperialism is causing this country to degenerate, instead of becoming a great moral force, and regards the outcome with some misgivings.

Nordau, no doubt is right. His anti-imperialistic feelings and views are shared by many in this country. He has the sympathy of a large part of these. He has also the defects of their reasoning. Like them, Nordau views American imperialism from a political instead of an economic standpoint. This leads to all sorts of fallacies.

The United States does not rush into world affairs merely in order to acquire the political domination of foreign lands. The United States rushes into world affairs primarily to secure the economic domination of foreign markets. It needs these in order to maintain its commercial position, without which its existence as a nation would be endangered. The United States, impelled by the necessity of getting rid of the surplus products, which, owing to the robbery of the working class by means of surplus value, cannot be consumed in its own markets, must expand or burst; and, in order to protect its home market from destruction, an event which would be equal to piling up its surplus products, the United States must secure control of countries like Cuba, some of whose industries threaten, by their competition, to work such destruction.

The United States, as a matter of capitalist safety, cannot give free trade to Cuba, nor can it relinquish its hold on the Philippines, the gateway to the vast new and undeveloped markets of China, with their 500,000,000 beings who can be converted into purchasers. The protection of domestic markets and the greater development of production over consumption makes it imperative that the capitalist class of the United States maintain imperialism at the present excessive cost. Such cost will not be as heavy to the capitalist class as that which would have to be paid were the commercial outlets of the United States closed; for such a condition of

affairs would provoke industrial stagnation, disorder and discontent, all of which would, most likely, bring about the downfall of the American capitalist class and American capitalism.

Nordau, and those who believe as he does, fail to strike at the cause of this necessity. They are battling with effects, not causes. With the necessity for foreign markets removed, with the capitalist robbery of surplus value gone, the United States would be truly incapable of degeneracy, for then it would be moral to the core. Then would it really be the great moral force which the philosophers and the friends of humanity have always hoped it would be.

But the Nordaus, especially those of this country, will not part with capitalism; they will not remove the necessity. They will persist in adhering to capitalism, to keep that necessity alive, believing that the logical outgrowths of capitalist development can be other than the putrid things they are. Let them then stand the consequences of their folly without complaint. To the socialist alone is it wisely and truly given to combat imperialism by removing its necessity through the substitution of socialism for capitalism. Through the replacement of the robber capitalist system by the socialist co-operative system, in which the producer will receive the full value of his product and be in a position to purchase it back; in which, consequently, surplus products and the necessity for foreign markets and foreign domination will be unknown.

The socialist is the only true anti-imperialist.

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