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EDITORIAL

POSSIBILITIES AND POSSIBILITIES.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE tumultuousness of the strikes on and about May-Day, the vast areas that they extend over, and the May-Day spirit that, knowingly and unknowingly animate a vast percentage of the participants, coupled with the effective throwing out of gear of large capitalist, even government undertakings, give occasion for encouraging, and also for serious reflection.

In a Pullman buffet car, quite recently, a conversation took place between two passengers on the economic situation. Led on from one conclusion to another, one of two passengers, a rotund, hard-featured capitalist, was suddenly put this question by his interlocutor, whom, of course, he all along considered one of his breed:

“And suppose these workingmen were all some day to refuse working altogether?”

The rotund and hard featured capitalist pricked {up} his ears with a start, and knocking out his handsome merschaum-pipe, answered, or rather said aloud to himself:

“That would be d----d uncomfortable for us.”

Quite so! The working class holds the capitalist class in the hollow of its right hand. Its natural tendency to act in unison appears periodically in its “sympathetic” movements. Acting in a body, and animated, not sentimentally, but intelligently by a well-formulated instinct of its class interests, the American working class may, any day it wants to, come by its own, and wipe out wage slavery.—That is a possibility; and these May-Day strikes encouragingly point thereat.

But there is another possibility, less encouraging, more serious. Mass movements are peculiarly prone to sentiment, and sentiment is peculiarly open to imposition. With

the Mitchells and the Gomperses; with the Waudbys now looming up; with the Sargents and the Powderlys and scores of such other birds of evil omen, held in high esteem by capitalists, and simultaneously still held, more or less, in their confidence by large numbers of workingmen, it is but the tossing of a penny whether the electric spark of freedom shoot{s} upward into a purifying conflagration, or is led into the ground, there to die out harmless.—That is the other possibility, certainly less encouraging.

As the scales tremble toward the one possibility and the other, the militants of the land, in solid array under the banner of the Socialist Labor Party are throwing the full weight of their glistening sword into the former scale, to the end that the latter shall kick the beam.

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

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