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EDITORIAL

THE GOSPEL OF SUCCESS.

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THIS is an age of deep social unrest. Increasing numbers of the working class are chafing under the yoke of economic dependence. The list of suicides due to economic failure grows at an alarming pace. The concentration of capital continues unchecked, making escape from these intolerable conditions less and less possible. On all hands there is evident the necessity for a general improvement—a social uplifting.

This social unrest has met with the opposition of the capitalist class. Instinctively they feel that it imperils their position as the master class. They have, consequently, found it advisable to allay this unrest and turn it to their own class advantage. Accordingly, they endeavor to prevent this social unrest from seeking social relief. To this end they direct attention to individual effort and preach the gospel of success.

This gospel has many “cardinal principles.” The first and foremost, the one that is dwelt upon with the greatest emphasis, is summed up in these words: “Work means success. Without work there can be no success.” From this one is to conclude that in order to succeed one must work and work hard.

It is far from the Socialist’s contention that it is possible to achieve any end without effort. He does, however, point out that if work means success, the great majority of the working class ought to be successful, for none individually and collectively work as hard as they. None, however, are so unsuccessful as they, taking wealth and its accompaniments as the criterion of success.

It will not do to urge that the majority of the working class lack purpose or persistency, for such workingmen are not employed by the capitalist class. Nor will it suffice to say that they are not inventors nor directors; for the claim that all the purpose, persistency, inventiveness and executive ability in the world, is lodged under the hats of

the comparatively few successful capitalists, is a libel on the human race and a distortion of facts—it is a lie. Observe the frantic helplessness of the capitalists in a great strike. Where is the all-potent “purpose, persistency, inventiveness and executive ability” of the capitalist class then? In the sheriff’s, governor’s, or judge’s office, appealing to the “law” to drive the workingmen, without whom they are helpless, back to work!

The capitalist is not successful because he is a hard worker. He is successful because he is a capitalist. As Karl Marx has well said:

“It is not because he is a leader of industry that a man is a capitalist; on the contrary, he is a leader of industry because he is a capitalist. The leadership of industry is an attribute of capital, just as in feudal times the functions of general and judge were attributes of landed property.”

The gospel of success is like the theory of political equality in this country, in its workings. Two per cent. of the population of 76,000,000, at most, can hope, under capitalism, to be successful; just as one man out of twelve million voters can hope to be president, providing the incumbent isn’t elected to a second term.

With the capitalist class in control of the capital of the nation, the practical application of this will-o’-the-wisp of success simply means hard work in the interest of the capitalist class. In this day, when restriction of output is being opposed, when the struggle for {the} world’s markets is on, work, ever more work, is what the capitalists need. And how can it be better obtained than turning the great social unrest from social action to individual “relief”? And how can the capitalist class better save its ownership and control of the capital of the nation, than by this perversion?

Hard work will mean success only under Socialism. Then the individual and collective effort now expropriated by the capitalist class will redound to society.

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