

EDITORIAL

TOWARDS INDUSTRIAL FEUDALISM.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE resolution, reported to have been adopted at the Indianapolis convention of the United Mine Workers, favoring “government ownership of all industries” sounds like a cry of blind despair.

Lecturing to the Columbia Law Class of 1878, Prof. Theodore W. Dwight neatly condensed one side of feudal development in these words: “The originally independent peasantry, finding themselves robbed by scores of robber barons instinctively put themselves under the shelter of one. They did not say so in so many words, but what they meant was: ‘We know we have no power to prevent robbers from plucking us; but we will bargain with you to protect us from the other robbers in consideration of our submitting to be plucked by just you.’” In that way the big robber baron came into existence.¹

The miners have, of course, a general idea of the multiple robbery perpetrated behind the fortifications of the several industries. When, however, they resolve in favor of all industries what they especially have in mind is their own, the mining industry. About that they need be told nothing. They are familiar with every single bead of exploitation in the long rosary with which Saint John Mitchell performed, and, secretly, still performs, his devotions at the shrine of the Civic Federation—the pluck-me store, the check-off, the black-list, the fines, the check-weighman, compulsory idleness to consume excessive out-puts, mutilation of limbs, etc., etc. The miner knows them all. Robbed to the right, robbed to the left, robbed by a long chain of robbers, which starting from some Civic Federation head-center, extends down to the twenty-second assistant labor-lieutenants of the Top-capitalist; at the same time aware of the manifold capitalist practices of the capitalist Government upon its

¹ [Presumably a bit of autobiographical recollection, perhaps from lecture notes kept from his student days.—R.B.]

wage slave employes;—the miner, in convention assembled, adopted a resolution which amounts to addressing the Government in these words: “We are unable to prevent the several capitalists from plucking us; but we will bargain with you to protect us against the separate others in consideration of our submitting to be plucked by just you.”

The miners convention’s move is not a move of conscious class-destiny, hence, of conscious class-power and dignity. It is a move born of the weakness that despair breeds. The former leads forward to Socialism; the latter rolls backward toward feudalism generally—a feudalism adapted to improved material possibilities of production—a sort of social mongrel, Feudal Capitalism or Capitalist Feudalism.

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