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EDITORIAL

## “ONE PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

**T**HE capitalist interests of the country are pulling themselves together to make a head against Socialism. They realize that phrases will not do; they realize that declamation will not do. At last it has percolated through their wool that phrases and declamation will stand in this instance as little as Mrs. Partington's now celebrated mop staved against the Atlantic ocean. They need, this they are now sure of, something stronger, more practical. Their papers, accordingly are now teeming with practical suggestions to “combat the evil.” One of these articles contains “one practical illustration” that is worth all the others in that it betrays the trend of capitalist strategic thought in this conflict.

The “practical illustration” in question consists mainly in figures. It runs this way:

“There are in the country 80,000,000 people. The value of the total products of the nation is \$18,000,000,000. This is \$225 for each man, woman and child in the country. For a family of four this means an income of \$900 a year.”

After this argument, presented in figures, the following figures, presented in argument, follow:

“So that every head of a household who is receiving this salary, and there are thousands of them, is getting his share if there were an equal distribution according to population of all the products of the country.”

It must be admitted that, although in this second passage the figures are mainly dissolved in the argument, they are none the less prominently forceful than in the first passage, where the argument is mainly dissolved in figures. Indeed, the two passages are so strictly statistical that they amount to a mathematical demonstration. The

demonstration runs this wise:

“There are 80,000,000 people in the country:

“The value of the nation’s products is \$18,000,000,000:

“Distributed equally among heads of households of four members each—householder, wife and two children—, that would give each head of a household \$900 a year:

“‘Thousands’ [that’s to say, several times 1,000, but not more than 1,999 and a fraction times 1,000, because otherwise it would be “millions”; the word “thousands” is cautiously and statistically chosen,] of householders get their share:

“There are 15,000,000 voters in the land

“Deducting the ‘thousands’ up to the extreme limit of 1,999,999, THERE REMAIN 13,000,001 VOTERS.”

Can any illustration compete with this in practicalness? Impossible! But to whom is the illustration addressed? To the 13,000,001 heads of householders who are getting below their share, away, away below their share? Why, of course not. If it were, then the illustrator would not call his illustration “practical”, as he does himself: he would then call it a “demagogic vapoing.” The illustration is addressed to the “thousands.” It is meant to hold the noses of these “thousands” who are getting their share—those who are getting their share many hundreds of times more being included—down to certain hard facts. It means to tell them that they must stop “fooling.” It means to “illustrate” to them what they are “up against.” It means to tell them as loud as facts and figures can: “Disfranchise that 13,000,001 horde! Entrench yourselves behind physical fortresses against an even many times larger horde than that, which, as a dry sponge absorbs water, is thirstily absorbing ‘demagogic vaporings!’”

“Facts and figures” can do no more. They have reached high-water mark of perfection. The “illustration” is eminently “practical.”

Pass it on!

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

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