

# DAILY PEOPLE

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EDITORIAL

## CONVERSATION NO. 1.

By DANIEL DE LEON

[Under this head will be reproduced a series of conversations that were either listened to or partaken in by the editor of *The People* in the company of the capitalist passengers, whom he met in the Pullmans in the course of his recent extensive tour in the West.]

**O**N the morning of March 21, at about 9 o'clock, after breakfast, about 50 miles east of Hazen, Nev., there were seated a number of passengers around the small tables, placed in the open alcoves, in the buffet observation car of the overland limited train that left Ogden, Utah, the previous evening for the West. As De Leon entered the car he found the table in the first alcove occupied. Around it sat four slick-looking capitalists—three middle aged and one elderly gentleman. He passed by that table. In the second alcove a solitary gentleman occupied the table—it was Mahoney, “Acting President” of the Western Federation of Miners. The eyes of the two met; surprise at the encounter was for an instant manifested by both; but they fell not into each other’s arms; they not even exchanged greetings. De Leon moved on. The next alcove and table just behind Mahoney was vacant. De Leon entered it, sat down, took out his T.D. clay pipe, filled it, lighted it and started to smoke. Almost immediately the following words fell upon his ears and made them prick up:

“That I.W.W. is the limit!”

The exclamation proceeded from the table in front of Mahoney at which the four capitalist-looking passengers were seated. Presently, this other sentence was heard, proceeding from the same quarter:

“That whole Goldfield region will go to the dogs if these men have their way.”

From another voice: “What are they but Anarchists? There is St. John, the worst anarchist of the lot.”

After a little while:—“Those men were all right until St. John came down. They

changed. They now act like possessed.”

A fourth voice, undoubtedly from the old gentleman: “St. John is no worse than the rest of ’em. The I.W.W. is the trouble.”

Several minutes passed during which the conversation lulled, or, without intending it to be whispered, could not be clearly enough overheard. The only distinguishable words were “I.W.W.,” “Goldfield,” “wages,” “town workers,” “shipments,” etc. Presently, it seemed to be a summary of what he had been just saying indistinctly, the elderly voice uttered this sentence clearly, deliberately, distinctly enough to be heard all over the car:

“What have carpenters got to do with miners? What have miners got to do with carpenters? What have either got to do with waiters? I NEVER HEARD OF SUCH A THING BEFORE IN ALL MY LIFE. It is anarchy, just that. If carpenters, waiters and miners can be allowed to strike together, what would prevent the men on this train from striking with the miners?! They might as well seize all the mines and all the railroads—”

“And the rest of the country!” broke in another voice.

“Yes, of course,” continued the elderly voice. “There is no use in talking. THE MINERS MUST NOT BE ALLOWED TO REMAIN IN THE I.W.W. WITH THE CARPENTERS AND TOWN WORKERS.”

This matter being settled to the satisfaction of the gentlemen, the conversation branched off on other topics. Off and on it reverted back to the I.W.W.

Mahoney heard that conversation, every word of it; he knew De Leon heard it; what is better yet, he knew De Leon knew he had heard it. Like De Leon, Mahoney was on the way to Goldfield, and both had to and did change cars at Hazen to take the southbound train. Both men knew each other’s errand. Mahoney knew De Leon was bound for Goldfield, Tonopah, Rhyolite to deliver addresses on Industrial Unionism; De Leon knew Mahoney was bound for Goldfield to take charge of the strike. If ever Accident spoke to a man, giving him a mandate how to conduct himself on his mission, Accident did on that occasion when it smote Mahoney’s ears with the words of the capitalist quartet, who unguardedly admitted their safety as plunderers of the working class, of the very men in his own organization, depended upon the tearing of the miners from the industrial bonds that bound them to their

fellow wage slaves in the other industries. If ever Accident threw light upon the mind's eye of a man, who until then was in honest darkness, Accident threw that light then and there upon the mind's eye of Mahoney. If ever Accident so contrived it as to cause the cleansing of the heart of a man who honestly had opposed the man who sat just behind him, to cause him to realize that a friend, not a foe sat there; to make him repentant of the wrong his recent conduct had done that man; and to drive him to offer him his hand—in short, if ever Accident caused Capitalism itself to establish unity by enforcing oneness of purpose in men active in the labor movement, Accident issued its orders on that overland westbound train, on that morning of March 21.

To De Leon the occurrence was an added inspiration on his agitation tour to labor for the I.W.W.—

To Mahoney the occurrence was an added spur to sandbag the working class.

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