

EDITORIAL

STANDARD AND COST.

By DANIEL DE LEON

A NEW set of terms that has suddenly become the subject of jugglery on the lips of social jugglers with words is “Standard of Living” and “Cost of Living.”

The “standard of living” is that degree of physical, mental and spiritual well-being (or the opposite of well-being) that an individual, or a class, enjoys (or suffers under, as the case may be). Taking the Working Class exclusively, its standard of living at any one time consists of the amount and quantity of food and raiment that it consumes, the nature of its housing, the degree in which employment is certain, the degree of leisure it enjoys for mental and spiritual expansion.

The “cost of living,” is the amount, in dollars and cents, required to secure food, fuel, raiment, clothing, housing and the other necessaries of life.

The “Standard of Living” and the “Cost of Living” are interrelated, but they are not the same thing; leastwise are they invertible terms:—

A certain “Standard of Living” and a certain “Cost of Living” happening to coincide, the “Standard of Living” may rise without the “Cost of Living” rising.—This would happen either if prices decline; or if earnings rise.

A certain “Standard of Living” and a certain “Cost of Living” happening to coincide, the “Cost of Living” may rise without affecting the “Standard of Living” for the worse.—This would happen if earnings increase proportionally.

A certain “Standard of Living” and a certain “Cost of Living” happening to coincide, the “Standard of Living” may decline without the “Cost of Living” rising.—This would happen if earnings decline.

A certain “Standard of Living” and a certain “Cost of Living” happening to coincide, the “Cost of Living” may decline and yet the “Standard of Living” may not rise, and may even go down.—This would happen if earnings would decline at a larger

ratio than the decline in the “Cost of Living.”

It follows, accordingly, that all claims to the effect that the “Cost of Living” represents the workers’ “Standard of Living” are founded upon a jugglery with words—a jugglery that is pivoted upon the suggestion of a false fact, to wit, that a rise in the “Cost of Living” is accompanied with a rise in earnings.

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