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SECOND EDITORIAL

The Annual Insult of Labor

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On the last day of last month, Decoration Day, the country was, throughout its length and breadth, the theatre of an annually recurring spectacle, whose noise and glare and gorgeousness and patriotic display, so far from being an honor, are a disgrace to the nation; so far from betokening gratitude, point the finger to the ingratitude that is inherent in a social system where the idler thrives while the toiler pines, where the worthless are decked in honor while the worthy are clad in shame, where Sham is glorified while Truth is mocked.

Decoration Day is an insult to Labor.

All honor to the men who in the Sixties, or on any other occasion, went to the front, exposed life and limb and health to the Nation's welfare, and fell in her defense. Their brows cannot be garlanded with sufficient laurels; their names cannot be remembered with sufficient honor. But to reserve for these alone all praise, all the flowers, all the grateful reminiscences and leave forgotten, unmentioned with even a small word that larger, and, at least, equally, if not more, worthy army of Labor is an insult to the latter and one of the many badges of shame that brand our civilization shameful.

The soldiers who fell in battle or there exposed themselves, did valuable work at a moment, for a few months, or a few years. But the Veterans of Toil have spent a life time to save the nation. They have struggled during the whole period of adult life, if not longer, to defeat the permanent foe of man—Hunger, Thirst, Inclement Weather. Their mutilated bodies are legion, and the lives they have sacrificed, directly and indirectly, in this struggle by far overcap those of the soldiers. Aye, not a single year passes over the Nation's head but more workingmen, women and children are slaughtered and maimed than were maimed and slaughtered during the whole war of the Rebellion. Our factories, our mills, our shops, our railroad road-beds are veritable fields of carnage, and it is upon the bleaching bones of these heroes that the Nation stands.

Fortunately this indictment is not a mere evanescent, impotent sigh. The day is at hand when this infamy will be wiped out. When the plucky, dauntless heroes of Labor will receive recognition. When a grateful nation, at last emancipated from the thrall of the oppressor, will find sweet-scented flowers and bountiful praise for the class that carried it through the daily struggle for life, bore it on its shoulders across the Valley of the Shadow of Death of Capitalism, smote the tyrant of man—the Capitalist class—and reared, as its culminating work, the structure of the Co-operative Commonwealth.

Until then, ours be the hitherto neglect task to strew with flowers the graves, and gratefully to recall the memory of the departed Sons of Toil.

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

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