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SECOND EDITORIAL

Our Indians.

By DANIEL DE LEON

It is with much pride that many of our Eastern people love to contrast themselves with the Indians. They look down upon the Red Skin as an infinitely inferior being, and tell stories about him to show his intellectual inferiority and their own intellectual superiority. This self-complacent pastime is quite conspicuous among our small trader class, the lower bourgeoisie. And yet, when one watches these portents of civilization at their present antics, he cannot repress the question, What is the difference between these and the Indians? A recent occurrence in uptown New York forced the question upon the intelligent onlookers.

What with the general and increasing poverty, which keeps customers away from all stores, and what with the concentration of the retail trade into large emporiums or department stores, which turns whatever trade there is away from the small stores, the small shopkeeper is experiencing dull, dark days. Driven by such straits, an uptown retailer hit upon a singular, or rather, typical plan to drive away his hard times. He fitted up a wagon with transparencies that bore the following exhortations.

“Stop grumbling!”

“Your discontent is only imaginary.”

“You are prosperous if you only knew it.”

“Patronize [here he inserted his own name.]”

“Money is made round to the end that it may roll—set it agoing.”

“If you don’t buy you can’t sell.”

“A faint heart soon breaks down; be brave; go out and buy what you need.”

“Penury in your house draws poverty.”

“Hip, Hip, Hip, Hurrah, cheer up!”

Inside of the wagon he placed a couple of drummers, who kept up an eternal clatter, and he drove the wagon up and down all over his neighborhood.

The story is told of the benighted Indians that when the face of the sun was darkened by an eclipse they gathered themselves into processions and marched through the villages yelling and beating upon their most hideously sounding instruments to the end of scaring away the Evil Spirit who obscured the face of the great luminary.

What is the difference, if any, between these Indians, in sight of the phenomenon of a sun eclipse, and our tradesman, in sight of the present phenomenon of a prosperity eclipse?

Ignorant of the laws of astronomy, the Indian’s phantasy supplied an explanation and a remedy that makes one laugh; ignorant of the law of economics, the modern tradesman resorts to theories that are not a whit less imbecile. As the Indian knew nothing about the movements of our planetary system, an eclipse appalled him; as the trader knows nothing of the mechanism of capitalist society, he does not comprehend whence the present hard times proceed, he has no inkling of the fact that Poverty is bound to spread its pall over ever larger areas of our population, and eclipse the face of Prosperity, and that the darkness produced by this social phenomenon can be affected by kettle-drumming as little as the darkness produced by the astronomic phenomenon.

Those who to-day look for Prosperity before capitalism is overthrown stand on the level of the Indian.

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

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