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EDITORIAL

A HAPPY NEW YEAR!

By DANIEL DE LEON

ONCE upon a time, in the history of the human race, within the fold of an Empire, the most powerful yet seen on earth and which raised to the highest pinnacle of perfection the theory “PROPERTY is more precious than LIFE,” the occurrence was regular of gladiators, chosen to delight the ruling class with their skill at arms and with their dying agonies, marching proudly around the arena, and, standing at the foot of the throne of the Emperors, intonate the greeting: “Salve, Caesar, nos morituri te salutamus!”—Hail to you, Caesar, we who are about to die, salute you!

Nigh twenty centuries have rolled over the head of human kind since that spectacle of a despotic property-holding class, and of the despotized disinherited, agreeing so completely upon the supremacy of PROPERTY above LIFE that, as a matter of course, the property-holder accepted the LIFE of the property-less as his due, and the property-less, in turn, poured out its LIFE, as a matter of course, as a meet libation at the wassails of PROPERTY. The paganish superstition has not yet wholly vanished.

On this very day “A Happy New Year!” is hardly distinguishable, on the lips of many of the modern disinherited, from the essence of greeting vouchsafed the Caesars by the gladiators about to die. On the lips of many of the modern disinherited, and on the ears of all holders of PROPERTY, “A Happy New Year!” but means a continuation of conditions typified by the gorgeous Christmas Tree, “laden with sausages, ham-bones, juicy chicken and other delicacies” given last Christmas by the society belle Miss Nannie Sloan of Baltimore to her dogs Lady, a gray-hound; Billy, a fox-terrier; and Tramp, a pug, while the LIFE of the producers of all wealth, “sausages, hams, juicy chicken and other delicacies” included, slowly ebbs in misery.

And yet, uneradicable as the superstition is with PROPERTY, and slow to

eradicate as it is from the mind of wide layers of the disinherited, the superstition is fast losing ground. With a powerful minority of the propertyless in the civilized world to-day—a minority big with the Future, a Future that is at hand—the superstition is dead, and cast to the winds of oblivion. With this minority, on the grave of the death-dealing superstition of old a life-bringing principle is reared—LIFE IS MORE PRECIOUS THAN PROPERTY. On the lips of this minority “A Happy New Year!” preserves not a vestige of the meaning it breathed on the lips of the Roman gladiator. Exactly the reverse. On the lips of this swelling minority of the to-day, the full-throated wish “A Happy New Year!” is the distant rumbling of that approaching social storm which, when it shall have passed over the head of mankind, will leave behind a social system in which LIFE will be sacred, PROPERTY its servant, and HAPPINESS, not the stolen privilege of a few, but the inheritance of all.

A Happy New Year! shouts the Fighting S.L.P. of the land to the wage slave wherever found.

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