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EDITORIAL

MRS. HARRIMAN'S INHERITANCE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

E. H. HARRIMAN'S will is now probated. The Transfer Tax Appraiser has begun to work. Subject to some insignificant changes, the property left by the deceased to his wife is stated to amount to \$100,000,000.

The question comes—\$100,000,000 what, or in what?

Did Harriman leave to his wife \$100,000,000 worth of silks and satins and velvets and embroideries, made up or ready to be made up, into gorgeous attire?—No.

Did he leave her \$100,000,000 of villas, city residences, stables, yachts fitted out and stocked with furniture and horses and carriages and automobiles to match?—No.

Or did he leave to her mountains and stores of eatables to the amount of \$100,000,000?—No.

Or, perhaps, he left her \$100,000,000 worth of all these things together?—No, again.

Well, he was a railroad magnate. Perhaps what he left to his widow is hundreds and thousands of miles of railroads—railroad-beds, rails, spikes, all in position and rolling stock, engines, cars, Pullmans, dining cars, with full equipments, and, all told, worth \$100,000,000?—Not at all.

If not, in what useful articles, \$100,000,000 worth, does the inheritance consist? The inheritance consists in hardly any of these things, or of any other useful articles. If all these kind of things were put together they would amount to but a bagatelle of the \$100,000,000.

Is there then a mistake in the figures? No; no mistake. Then there must be \$100,000,000 worth of useful articles. There is none such. Impossible! No impossible about it: 'tis a fact.

What Harriman owned and left to his widow is not a heap of wealth \$100,000,000 in value; what he left to her is a \$100,000,000-POWER to extract and appropriate to herself the wealth to be produced by working people.

The wealth held by the capitalist is not measured by its intrinsic worth. If it were measured by that standard the millionaires would hardly be. The wealth held by the capitalist is measured by its power to yield more wealth to him. The wealth of a Harriman consisted in its capacity to yield him a multi-millionaire's return.

And much hangs thereby:—

Wealth is generally perishable. Even the widow of Harriman would be a pauper within a year if she had to live on what she got. She will be no such pauper. Why? Because of the plentiful yield by Labor of wealth that she is able to appropriate—able because of the weapon in her hands, a \$100,000,000 cannon power to “hold up” the proletariat. That's what Mrs. Harriman inherited.

It follows that Capital is in the nature of a mortgage upon the living and upon future generations—a mortgage that civilization demands shall be foreclosed summarily.

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