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EDITORIAL

BLESSFUL “INSISTENCE,” HARMFUL “OBJECTION.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

AT a meeting of the City Club, recently held to discuss the question of raising the salary of women teachers, Dr. John B. Clark of Columbia University is reported to have “insisted” that the law of supply and demand must control wages of teachers, as it controls the wages of all other wage earners, in other words, as it controls the price of all commodities. The report adds that Miss Grace Strachan, the estimable woman teacher who has led the move for the equalization of salaries, objected to the market value idea. It made her think, she said, of carrots and potatoes, things with which she objected to be classed.

The statement of Dr. Clark and the objection of Miss Strachan present a unique, withal an instructive picture. Dr. Clark the representative of reaction, was right, and, despite himself, the law upon which he “insisted” is a law that makes for progress. Miss Strachan, the representative of progress, was wrong, and despite herself, the sentiments she clung to are stumbling blocks to progress.

The law of supply and demand determines the price of goods in the market. Whatever has a “market” is “goods,” or merchandise, a commodity. There being, under capitalism, a “labor market,” as well as a “cattle market,” it follows that, under capitalism, labor is “goods,” or merchandise, a commodity. The logical insistence upon this law, regardless of all sentimental trammels, is an earnest that the logic of capitalist rule will be pushed to the breaking point. By ruthlessly insisting upon a law of capitalist economics that brings home their merchandise quality to ever increasing numbers; by ruthlessly breaking through all sentimentalism, and insisting upon a law that tears up sentiment by the roots, capitalism deprives, and the law of its existence compels it to deprive, itself of the protection of a superstition that blinds its victims to their won interest. Columbia’s

Dr. Clark's insistence is precious for good.

For obverse reasons Miss Strachan's objection is harmful. So long as any division of the Army of Labor lives in memories of a past which capitalism has thrown into the Museum of Antiquity; so long as any division of the Army of labor still rocks its mind in the superstition that it is human and not chattel;—just so long will the Army of Labor be a sort of mob, easily routed, captured and enslaved by the capitalist class. Not until that superstition has worn itself out; not until the unconsciousness of the proletariat—whether intellectual or manual—will have descended into the hell of Merchandise conditions;—not until then will they be able to ascend to the heaven of Emancipation.

The Social Revolution is awaiting the consequences, all long the line of the market stalls in which labor is for sale, of the law of supply and demand upon which the Columbia Dr. Clarks insist. Then will dawn the day when the merchandise Labor, emancipated in all its stalls—intellectual and manual—of the superstition that, under capitalism, it is above carrots and potatoes, will pull itself together out of the carrot-and-potato, that is, out of the merchandise category; and, its chest swelling with the dignity of Manhood and Womanhood, its mind equipped with the gospel of Socialism, break the chains of wage slavery, and enter into the full physical, mental and spiritual fruition of Life.

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