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EDITORIAL

OFF WITH “RATS”!

By DANIEL DE LEON

FIFTY years ago the now 87 years old Thomas R. McNell founded the Smith & McNell Hotel, an establishment that has become a landmark in this city, and that prospered greatly.

Establishments like that of Smith & McNell are not a few. Started more than a generation ago, they are often pointed to now—when the country, this city in particular, is virtually many times that number of years older in economic development, hence in the class-relations of employer and employe—as an evidence of the falseness of the Socialist’s views that the employe is a subject, the employer an overlord.

“Lo,” so runs the anti-Socialist contention, “with little capital a man can start; by industry and perseverance he can prosper. And, while he prospers, the relations between him and his employes remain cordial.” Not infrequently the contention is backed up by proof of some beautiful present made by the employes to their dear employer. The Smith & McNell establishment furnishes such a “proof.” Only last Christmas the employes presented Mr. McNell with a \$200 diamond ring.

Unfortunately for the anti-Socialist Mr. Thomas McNell did not depart this earthly scene immediately after receipt of the diamond ring. Unfortunately for the anti-Socialist Mr. McNell lived several weeks longer, long enough to knock down the anti-Socialist’s card-house of the fraternal relations between employer and employe.

Last Monday, as Mr. McNell walked into the dining room where the young women waitresses were eating he noted that most of them wore “rats” in their hair. Fifty years ago Mr. McNell would have kept to himself his private views concerning “rats” as an improvement to the appearance of woman’s hair. Not so now. This being fifty years later, not only did Mr. McNell not keep his views to himself, but utterly oblivious of the \$200 diamond ring, or, rather, remembering the gift only as the

thing it really was, the homage of inferiors to their superior, a bribe to secure a living, he strutted Pasha-like through the room, and issued his firman—“This is no ball room. Those baskets must come off the girls’ hair!”

Fifty years ago the waitresses would have “dratted the brute’s impudence.” Today, fifty years later, the female wage slaves of McNell “immediately stampeded,” so says the report, “to the dressing room to comply with the order.” Off went the “rats.”

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