

Regeneración English Section

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SUBSCRIPTION RATES
Single copy, 5 cts.
One dollar a year.—6 months, 50c.

No. 224
Saturday Feb. 5, 1916

Send money payable to
ENRIQUE FLORES MAGON.
P. O. Box 1236, Los Angeles, Cal.

The Propagandist's Golden Opportunity Is Now.

The following article has been contributed by me to the special number which "Volne Listy," of New York, the revolutionary organ of the Bohemians, is publishing in commemoration of its twenty-fifth anniversary.

This is the revolutionary propagandist's supreme opportunity. Today he has a chance such as he never yet has had, for War has forced to the front the really great issues, and the public is being compelled to think as it never thought before. The problems, are immense, and they call loudly for thinkers who cannot be deterred from uttering their full thought. Consider only a few of the factors in the case.

First: "patching-up," on which Labor—always our most conservative element and always a hundred years behind the times—wastes so much effort, has broken down hopelessly; and the public knows it. The bluff is played out. It has resulted only in loading us down with a new set of politicians, Labor politicians, the cheats of the lot. The public knows that.

Second; the European war has brought to the front the fundamental struggle between Man and the State. The public begins to appreciate that.

Third; militarism is involving this country already in enormous expenditures, for the appropriations asked of this present Congress—every cent of which will come out of the ordinary citizen's pocket—require that every man, woman and child in the United States contribute nine dollars to the politicians' coffers. That hurts; hurts most damnably; and it is making the public think.

Fourth; the Naval Board proposes that we spend, in one single year, \$400,000,000 on what is even now the second most powerful navy in the world. That makes the public squirm.

Fifth; the Secretary of War admits frankly that the "Volunteer Army" is only a stepping-stone to conscription. Over that Congress will be in an uproar, and that uproar will find its echo in every hamlet and cottage throughout the land.

Sixth; Wall Street is gambling, as it never gambled before, on war contracts, and colossal fortunes are being made while millions are in bitter want. That is causing the most wide-spread discontent, which will ripen into one knows not what when the inevitable panic comes.

All this gives rise to endless discussion, and largely it is intelligent discussion. Conscription, on the whole, is being debated intelligently, and the public understands apparently that conscription is a reversion to chattel slavery, since the individual is forced to donate to the State at least a portion of his life. Against that all English-speaking peoples instinctively revolt.

Instinctively the people of this country feel that they have been trying to develop an Industrial Democracy, and instinctively they feel that Industrial Democracy and Militarism are sworn foes, engaged in a battle to the death. Instinctively it is felt that, at this moment, the United States stands at the parting of the ways. Either it must persevere on its original path and endeavor patiently to transform its life into that of a true industrial democracy, wherein special privilege will be abolished; or it must slump back into militarism, robbing itself to the existence of a

powerful landed and moneyed aristocracy, form a strongly centralized government for the protection and further nurture of that aristocracy, and rule frankly by the sword.

Today this nation stands at that parting of the ways shifting uneasily from foot to foot and waiting for the decisive push. Here then is the true propagandist's great opportunity.

Then there is the Mexican question, which will not down. It cannot. There we are up against a real stone wall, and we must either break through it or retrace our steps. No other choice is possible.

Americans go into Mexico to exploit the natural resources and native labor of the country. They assume that they can call on their government to protect alike their lives and whatever property they may acquire, no matter how they get it. They assume also that they can call on their government to guarantee them safe enjoyment of enormous grants of land obtained in the past from Diaz and other Mexican politicians, and to see that they are indemnified for losses sustained during the last five years of revolution.

The ordinary Mexican's position is exactly opposite to this, for he holds that these lands are Mexico's lands; wishes Mexicans to have the opportunity of living on and cultivating them; does not want to be compelled to sell his labor that foreigners may make fortunes. He knows well that until he can get back his lands he will have to sell his labor, at whatever price the land monopolists choose to pay.

Naturally the militarists are eager to invade Mexico and annex it, for that plays directly into their hand and gives them the chance they have been looking for so long. Naturally also Americans financially interested in Mexico line up with the militarists, and naturally they have the sympathetic backing of those who, accepting social institutions as they find them, regard exploiters as entitled to protection. I submit that the Mexicans should just as naturally have the sympathetic backing, at least, of all those who believe that this earth is for the use of man as a species, and not for the exclusive use of any one set of men; who regard man as something superior to a salmon, to be caught in the net and sold to the highest bidder.

Probably millions of Americans would sympathize with the Mexican position if they understood it, and if they understood themselves. They do not understand because they are uninstructed on bottom principles: because no one has explained to them that until the workers have free access to natural resources it is stupid to talk of freedom and equality. Our propaganda on that head has to be straight, and it never can become straight until it is vastly more intelligent and well-informed than it has been hitherto. At present, to me at least, the spectacle of a so-called revolutionary movement staggering along blindly, it knows not whether, is a tragedy too deep for words.

It is most tragic that hundreds of thousands of American workmen believe that by mere organization they can become economically free while the very sources of life are still in the grasp of the monopolist.

It is most tragic that men so earnest and self-sacrificing as were those who originally rallied to the standard of the I. W. W. should allow themselves to be duped by the inexpressible shallow cry of "One Big Union."

It is most tragic that agitators should be able to command ap-

plause when they maintain that "Might is Right;" for that philosophy has been always the philosophy of military conqueror, and to adopt it is to abandon the very ground on which we should be impregnable. Our strength lies in the fact that we are advancing from barbarism to civilization, and in the fact that as man becomes more and more civilized he asks himself more and more earnestly on which side lies the right. No labor or revolutionary movement can make substantial headway until it has convinced the public that it is in the right. It is the propagandist's business to be in the right and to make the public see it.

It is most tragic that, at the very moment when Freedom would place at the disposition of the worker a civilization easily capable of abolishing want and the fear of want, the workers should turn their backs on Freedom and throw themselves into the arms of her bitterest foe, the State. When workers ask rulers to take their lives in charge and regulate their hours and wages, thus exalting the division between exploiter and exploited to the dignity of a State institution, to be defended by the law, with the bayonet back of it; when they court that humiliation, the tragedy appears to me far greater than any the entrenched battlefields of Europe can show us. Its effects will be far more permanent, for it will force us into a slavish mould from which we may not be able to escape for centuries. The story of Esau selling his birthright for a mess of pottage pictures but faintly what today is going on under our noses.

My only message to "Volne Listy," or any one, is that helplessness is the cause of poverty and tyranny; and that helplessness is caused by conferring special privileges on some at the expense of others. When all have equal opportunities; when all have equal access to natural resources; when the trade of ruling and the opportunity to rule fall into disuse; then, and only then, will man redeem himself from helplessness; then, and only then, will he become master of himself and able to make full use of that civilization which all the past generations have been toiling to create; then, and only then, will he be free.

We are not engaged in a class struggle, having for its object the hoisting into power of a new set of rulers. We are trying to establish equality of opportunity and thereby put an end to rulers.

We are not trying to throw the world into disorder, but to bring it in true order; for injustice and the denial of a square deal always beget chaotic strife. As illustrations we point to Europe and Mexico, although indeed we need not go beyond the borders of the United States. Where the few are given special privilege and clothed with special authority there is always war, often the more rancorous and deadly because beneath the surface.

We are not going to overthrow wage slavery, which is the child of monopoly and special privilege, by mass action directed toward squeezing better terms out of the monopolist. The monopolist always will be in a position to issue orders, and that is the military conception of society, from which we have to break away completely.

Thought on these great questions must be clarified and simplified. That is the one thing necessary, for as the people think they eventually will act. Above all, revolutionists must understand that truly powerful forces work quietly. There is less than

nothing in drawing big crowds by talking sexual indecencies. There is less than nothing in dramatic strike and pretending that we are helping the workers, when, in reality, we are only pandering to our love of excitement and our craving for large audiences. But on the other hand, there is everything in tackling, informedly and boldly, basic political and economic problems; in showing the people of the United States that they still live under a king in dress coat and an aristocracy of political and economic monopolists; in explaining clearly that, at bottom, the ethics of our officeholders, our landgrabbers, our cornerers of necessities, are the ethics of militarism, which teaches that life's one business is to crush the weakest to the wall.

To such a propaganda, simple and sincere, the people always listen attentively. The strenuous times through which we now are passing unquestionably will incline them to accept it today more eagerly and earnestly than ever.

WM. C. OWEN.

Such Is Life

Nothing could be more deplorable than Villa's massacre of eighteen Americans at Santa Isabel. Already this last despairing stroke of a vanquished politician has led to bloody reprisals on both sides, and there is the greatest danger that these, multiplying as passion mounts, may force armed intervention. The Wilson administration has a score of reasons for not wanting that, and no thoughtful American should want it, for it will lead to prolonged and bitter guerilla warfare and plunge this country into that militarism which all intelligent persons view as our most dangerous peril. Mexican troubles have their root in those social injustices to which a large proportion of the proletariat, especially in Mexico, is keenly sensitive, while the vast majority of well-to-do Americans have not, as yet, even begun to recognize them as injustices. Mining men and speculators of all kinds go down to Mexico in the pursuit of gain, and will tell you that they are helping to develop the country. From the viewpoint of the Mexican proletariat, and of many thinking Mexicans who do not belong to the proletariat, they go down to exploit the country's natural resources and rob its workers. Are such critics not right? Where is the country today in which development does not carry with it the robbery of Labor?

The Youngstown strike has come and gone, exacting the customary toll of deaths and jailings. I read the first account with melancholy and tossed the paper aside with utter lassitude. Was it that I have grown indifferent to Labor's struggle? No, it was simply that I have grown experienced; that forty years of similar happenings have taught me the same invariable lesson. The mob, and especially the drunken mob, accomplishes nothing except the getting itself and other harmless people into trouble. The police make the customary number of arrests, proportioned to the outbreak's size. If the situation has become serious the militia or regulars are called on and machine guns are brought into play. The mob flees, and has to flee, panic-stricken. Perhaps a few more of the proletariat are slaughtered. Optimists console themselves with the reflection that the spirit of discontent is further stimulated. Pessimists remark that the proletariat has added another to the long list of failures that have broken its spirit, and has given its enemy the best of all possible excuses for adding to the police force and

military powers. As a matter of fact you who read this line KNEW that was all it would amount to.

Margaret Sanger's trial came up Jan. 18, on indictments based upon twelve articles published in "The Woman Rebel", eleven of which articles discuss birth control. I have my own thought-out reasons for not believing in that propaganda, but I read "The Woman Rebel" carefully and came to the definite conclusion that it was edited by a thoughtful and capable woman who did believe in what she taught. The question is one of the first importance, and one on which intelligent and well-informed people differ; the majority, I take it, being on Margaret Sanger's side. The subject is a medical and scientific one, which should be ventilated thoroughly, and it goes without saying that it is to the interest of society to encourage to the utmost such discussion, any other course amounting simply to putting the mind in chains and being, therefore, suicidal. Margaret Sanger returned to this country last October, four days after her husband was released from jail. The circular letter she has sent out says, in part:—"The opportunity was offered me to plead guilty, thereby securing my release after payment of a small fine. I refused to do this, because the whole issue is not one of a mistake, whereby getting into jail or keeping out of jail is of importance, but the issue involved is to raise the entire question of birth control out of the gutter of obscenity and into the light of human understanding."

One should add that Margaret Sanger will go into court without any lawyer to defend her, and that she asks that funds raised be devoted to publicity; that is to say, to educational propaganda. In that, as in her desire to lift the whole subject of birth control "out of the gutter of obscenity," all sound men and women will be at one with her. The misfortune is that too many radicals cannot approach the subject with clean minds, and they cannot because they have so saturated themselves with erotic literature that they think of nothing else. Ask them whether Henry George and the Single Tax people are in favor of land nationalization and they can give you no answer, for of the land question they have not thought it worth their while to post themselves. Ask them what Proudhon and all the Individualist Anarchists, as they are called—although, for my part, I cannot see how anyone who is not an Individualist can call himself an Anarchist—say about the money monopoly, and they will not understand your question. Ask them what they think of Free Trade and Protection, which lie at the very root of such commercialism as enters into this European war, and they cover their utter ignorance by announcing that these are "bourgeois" questions which do not concern the proletariat. Such a movement is merely amusing itself and cannot be considered a factor in the struggle for political and economic freedom.

People who do not understand that we are headed straight for conscription—call it "Citizen Army" or whatever you please—are evidently people who do not read the news from Congress. I clip the following from the Washington report of Jan. 8:—

Representative Shallenberger asked Secretary Garrison if a universal military obligation did not make it possible for nations to be drawn into war despite the wishes of the majority of the people.

"I do not think France or Germany would be waging war if the majority of their people did not

favor it," replied the Secretary. "No nation ever is at war at variance with the wishes of the great majority of its people."

"Do you think this nation was behind the landing of troops in Mexico?" asked Mr. Shallenberger. Secretary Garrison declined to discuss that, saying he was not in the diplomatic service and his part in the Vera Cruz incident was merely that of an agent.

In pressing the point that the present limitations upon the use of the National Guard by the Federal Government safeguarded the country against the use of the troops for an aggressive purpose without the consent of Congress or the people, Representative Gordon referred to the Vera Cruz occupation and the occupation of the Panama Canal Zone.

Does anybody in his senses really suppose that the sovereign American voter was consulted before the warships and troops were sent to Vera Cruz, or that the Kaiser humbly asked his subjects if they wanted to go to war? I notice that Lord Bryce, a truly philosophical mind, recently delivered his annual address as President of the British Academy, in the course of which he said:

"How few are the persons in every State in whose hands lie the issues of war and peace! In some of the now belligerent countries the final and vital decisions were taken by four or five persons only. Even in Britain decision rested practically with less than twenty-five; for though some few persons outside the Cabinet took a part, not all within the Cabinet are to be reckoned as effective factors. It is, of course, true that popular sentiment has to be considered, even in States more or less despotically governed. Against a strong and definite sentiment of the masses the ruling few would not venture to act. But the masses are virtually led by a few, and their opinion is formed, particularly at a crisis, by the authority and the appeals of those few whom they have been accustomed to trust or to obey. And after all, the vital decision at the vital moment remains with the few. If they had decided otherwise than they did, the thing would have not happened. Something like it might have happened later, but the war would not have come then and so."

That is absolutely true. It is absolutely true that, in spite of all our so-called Democratic developments—universal suffrage, etc., etc.—power is concentrated, more and more, in the hands of the very, very few. Until we reach a greater level of intellectual and economic equality this will continue, for the desires of the one millionaire will always outweigh those of ten thousand paupers, and the influence of a single trained mind be greater than that of a mob of ignoramuses. Of the two inequalities the mental one is unquestionably by far the greatest and most galling. With brains, and the trained ability to use them, you always amount to something. Without them you are nothing, however fat your bank account. I am making the argument for educational propaganda; for the promotion of intellectual efficiency in the things that really count. Upon the vital questions of the age the American public has no mind, because it is the victim of "that which the State, with more than Papal insolence, is pleased to call an education." I quote Herbert Spencer. As yet we are a nation carefully brought up to be duped.

Texas, the home of race intolerance and brutally vindictive penal legislation, has to her credit what is perhaps our strongest anti-land-monopoly movement. Last year a petition to amend the constitution by freeing from tax-

ation all forms of property created by labor received 80,000 signatures, and this year they hope to double the number. But the movement appears to have struck a snag, which "The Rebel," its chief organ, describes as follows:—"For full fifteen years the landed interest side-tracked all land legislation by keeping in the foreground as an issue the regulation of an appetite. Fearing the results of a land campaign the landlords of the State have determined to receive the prohibition issue and put it back in first place." Of course.

WM. C. OWEN.

CLINE'S APPEAL.

The indomitable friends of Charles Cline, who is still in the Bexar county jail at San Antonio, have taken an appeal and hope to get a retrial in another county at last. There is new evidence in his favor which can be put on if they can get sufficient funds. Buck, the star witness for the state, it is said has made admissions to parties which will be of inestimable value to Cline.

The chairman of the San Antonio Cline Committee writes:—"It is seldom that a lawyer will give his private opinion of the guilt or innocence of a man, but our attorneys in this case say they know Cline is not guilty." Cline stood by the Mexican comrades loyally. Now, we should stand by him. The International Socialist Review is collecting funds for his case. A responsible committee of the San Antonio Socialist local will see that the money is judiciously spent.

Send Cline a New Year's gift of a few dollars or dimes to help him out of his long imprisonment. Send to International Socialist Review, 341-349 East Ohio St., Chicago, Ill.

We are unworthy the name of revolutionists if we forget or neglect our heroes of the strife who are shut within capitalism's prison walls.

GEORGIA KOTSCH.

Theory And Practice.

In an address at Columbus not a great while ago President Wilson said:—"When things were perhaps more debatable than they are now about our immediate neighbor to the south, I know not how many men came to me and suggested that the government of Mexico should be altered as we thought it ought to be altered; but I, as a subscriber to the doctrine of the Virginia Bill of Rights, could not agree with them. The Mexicans may not know what to do with their government, but that is none of our business; and, so long as I have the power to prevent it, nobody shall 'butt in' to alter it for them."

Now that is pretty sound political theory; yet it is on record that we intervened quite extensively to alter the government of Mexico by refusing to recognize Huerta, when he was the government, and lending moral and material support to the insurrection against him. Probably both Carranza and Villa are under an impression that the shadow of Uncle Sam's hand is discernible in Mexican affairs.

"Saturday Evening Post."

The Mexican Question.

There are thousands of Americans in Mexico who have refused to leave there, even during all this row. Some other thousands got out in a rush, disguised as washer-women, peons, etc. Why were they disguised and in such a rush? No American workmen are being killed in Mexico. Please notice that those killed are all rich land-holders, rich mining men, rich cattle men, rich promoters, foremen, and bosses. The peons see the old brutality, the whip and the 20c a day Mex. returnig with them, so they stop the return of what they know to be a plague. Will someone inform me why no American workers or ordinary folks are bothered down there? There must be a reason—Wilford Dennis, Berkeley, Cal., in "Daily News"; San Francisco, Cal.