

Daniel De Leon

Editorial: Our Two Dromios

No end of fun, and also of instruction, is to be got in these days from the antics cut and mutual reproaches bandied by two, seemingly very distinct, yet essentially identical wings—the Dromios of America—among the elements that are now in revolt against existing conditions.

The one Dromio is represented by a reactionary Middle Class element; the other Dromio is represented by the fossil and equally reactionary Pure and Simple trade unionist.

The Middle Class Dromio feels that the flood is reaching his chin, and he is frantically beating about for means of escape. The tribulations that to-day assail the Middle Class proceed from its inability to produce as cheaply as the large capitalist, and, consequently, of competing with him. The industrial or agricultural goods produced upon the small farm or in the small shop are much dearer than, and can not stand against, those produced on a large scale. Feeling the results of this pressure, but ignorant of its cause, big chunks of this Middle Class are now reaching out for help in directions that could have given aid 40 or 30 years ago, but that now, under changed economic conditions, can not delay their sinking one minute. For instance, 40 or 30 years ago, the capital requisite for successful competition was infinitely smaller than to-day; 40 or 30 years ago, accordingly, the loan that could be raised upon the small havings of the small producer, even tho' it was less than the amount controlled by the then large producer, was not as utterly insignificant, proportionally, as it is to-day; to-day, the loans these small holders could raise are miles below those they need and have to compete with; consequently all their

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demands for free coinage, etc., are the demands, not of a living but a dead, not of a present but an extinct Middle Class.

On the other hand, the Pure and Simple trade unionist Dromio also feels the rope drawing tighter and tighter around his neck, and he too is sprawling for escape. His tribulations, not unlike those of his Middle Class double, proceed from the extension and the concentration of capital, and from its individual, private ownership despite its daily more clearly marked social character and functions. Himself stripped even of the illusion of property, he is compelled to sell his labor to the capitalist; the concentration of capital is synonymous with the introduction and perfection of machinery, whereby hands are steadily displaced; never paid more than their bare sustenance, the workingmen find it harder and harder to get even that little through increased competition with the increasing number of unemployed. Feeling the results of such a depressing state of things, and, like his counterpart of the Middle Class, ignorant of the cause of his trials, the pure and simple trades union Dromio reaches likewise for help in directions that could have given aid 40 or 30 years ago, but that now, under changed conditions, can not give him one second's relief. For instance, 40 or 30 years ago, possibly even 10 years ago, the velocity with which machinery was being introduced and perfected and labor displaced, pauperized and degraded had not reached the blinding speed it has to-day; 40 or 30, or even 10 years ago, the demand for compulsory education, referendum, direct legislation, sanitary inspection of workshops, abolition of contract system, etc., etc., would have afforded positive aid and relief to the worker; to-day all such and kindred demands, that stop short of the clear demand for the COLLECTIVE OWNERSHIP BY THE PEOPLE OF THEIR WHOLE MACHINERY OF PRODUCTION, are, in the language of Thomas Morgan, who proposed a full political program to the A.F. of L., "commonplace, and from time to time can be safely sandwiched into the political programs of our masters." Consequently, examined by the light of existing conditions, all

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such commonplace demands, that the boss class may now itself adopt, and that our Pure and Simple Dromio still hugs to his heart, are, similarly with those of our Middle Class Dromio, the demands, not of a present but an antiquated, not of a living but a dead working class—they are a caricature of the modern class struggle.

The Middle Class Dromio is angry at and justly styles his Pure and Simple compeer “dogmatic;” the Pure and Simple Dromio ruffles up his feathers, and, with an amusing affectation of superior knowledge, pronounces his Middle Class obverse “reactionary” and visionary; and both make faces at each other.

Yet neither Dromio has anything to twit the other with; they are both tarred with the same stick. Neither lives in the living present, both are vegetating in days gone by; neither realizes the revolution that has come over his special dunghill, both have stopped to learn for at least half a generation. The one as the other is the off-spring of fanaticism and superstitious Utopias.

While these two Dromios, the waning vestiges of a past, now gone beyond recall, are thus absorbed in their own reveries when they are not in each other’s hair, the Socialist Labor Party, together with its allies the New Trade Unionists, buoyantly pursues its unperturbed career, and, warning the people to guard against the dangers and quagmires that lurk behind all disregard of facts, behind all superstitious attachments, it holds up firmly and uncompromisingly, not dead but living class issues, not a fossil Class Struggle but a Class Struggle thrilled with the throbbings of life, not a platform made up of planks borrowed from wrecks but one set together of the only principles that can directly and indirectly, practically as well as theoretically, and withal most speedily, consolidate the toilers and bring on emancipation from the yoke of Capital.

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