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EDITORIAL

THE ASSUMED ADVANTAGES OF EXPANSION.

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The popular fallacy that men lust for office merely that they may be in a position of prominence, and may rule, was shown to be false by our conduct when we had forcibly acquired territory. Sovereignty, or absolute domination, was but the pretence for the purpose of using the countries, their resources, both in natural wealth, and in human labor power, for the purpose of enriching the class that had from the first demanded the invasion.

The Administration organs had seemed to be reluctant in the matter of intervention, but when the supposedly anti-Administration papers had wrought the people up to a pitch of frenzy, the others stepped into the breach and kept that madness boiling until the work had been accomplished.

To-day we find that there is no talk of retreat, no talk of giving the natives of the conquered islands liberty to select their own form of government. Their position relative to the United States is assumed as one of dependence, and we are the masters who are to grow rich from their wealth, powerful through their aid, and become a "world power" because of their advantageous geographical situation.

The American working man is told that the mills will supply the untutored savages with cotton and woolen goods, the shops and the factories will send shoes, household goods, farming implements, furniture, machinery, and many other articles, the demand for steel and iron products will keep the men working day and night to supply all these wants.

It is assumed that the one desire of the American workingman is to work. It does not matter for what he works. It does not matter what the work may be. It is no concern of his whether that work is, or is not, productive, tasteful or distasteful, sufficient to give him a living such as befits a human being, of a nature to insure him good health, or whether it is such work as will break him down mentally and physically. All he wants is work. The results flowing from the acquisition of new territory will be a chance to work. Nothing is said about an increased proportion of the product of his toil. Nothing is said about better conditions under which he toils.

All the man can wish is summed up in that one expression—A chance to work.

When he does work now, he receives enough to keep him in condition still to work, and to stock the labor market with his progeny. He produces untold wealth, and he only has a bare pittance. What difference would it make to him if half savage people had foisted upon them the articles that he produces with so much trouble, and at such a terrible drain upon his energy? He can make enough to clothe the whole nation in the finest raiment, to give them the best and the most wholesome food, and to build for them the finest and most comfortable residences. Will his condition be improved if all these things are diverted from this country, and are sent to another land?

The fight of the working man is not a fight merely for a chance to work, and still live in the misery and squalor in which he now works. He wishes to work, and have what he produces. If part of what he produces is shipped abroad, the condition of wage servitude still remains. If the natives of the Philippines commence to use our goods, we have only the privilege of working for a people whom we have never seen, of whom we know little or nothing, with whom we have only a commercial connection, not through our own class, but through our class enemies, the capitalists.

When the cotton and woolen mills of New England are running full time, those employed therein have added to their miserable fare, simply a career of hard, sapping, killing labor. They would have nothing added to their happiness, or their comfort if they were forced to produce for other people in other lands.

There is, however, an advantage in expansion, but it comes to those to whom industry is at present an advantage. The manufacturer could dispose of more goods, but he would not wish to dispose of more goods if he were forced to give to those in his employ what they produced. He must still extract from them the greatest possible amount of profit, and he must, under the new conditions, push them still harder, because he not only has his fellow manufacturers to contend with, but he confronts the manufacturer of other lands.

The industrial countries of the whole world are engaged in the struggle for supremacy in the markets which have been opened in Asia. Those who win out must do so by selling cheaply, and in order to sell cheaply they must produce cheaply. This means that the nation which has the best equipped plants, the most modern appliances, the cheapest raw materials, and the cheapest and most docile labor power will be the victors, and all others will fall by the wayside.

The whole matter may be summed up in the one statement that in order to capture the world's markets, the wage workers of the United States must come down to a level with the most poorly paid men in the world. We must compete with the working class of England, Germany, and the other European countries. Above all, we must enter into a struggle with the natives of the newly-opened districts, and we find that we have not only gained men whom we can supply with goods, but we have also acquired nations with whom we must struggle for a living.

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

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