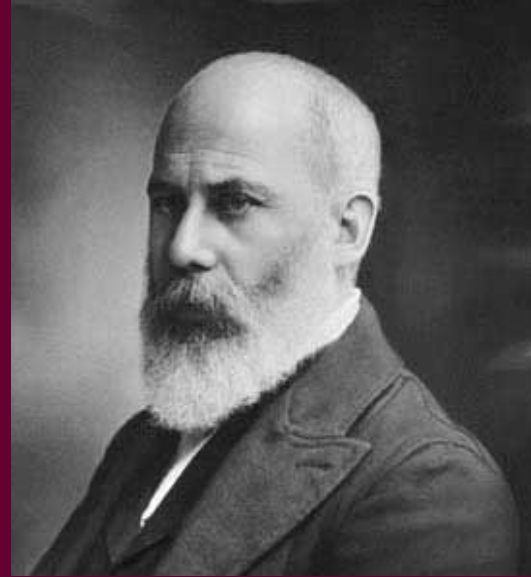


Daniel de Leon

“A New Era”

The People
Journal of the Socialist Labor Party
22 July 1894

Socialist Labor Party



Daniel De Leon

The mountains have heaved in the great social centre of Chicago, and have brought forth, not this time a ridiculous mouse, but a new, a portentous era for the Social Revolution in America.

Hitherto treason to the United States was construed to mean the raising of arms against the political sovereignty of the land. This construction sprang from the economic conditions under which the Federal Constitution was framed. The political power, the government of the land, was theoretically and *de facto* the property of the whole — at least of a majority — of the people. With the development of capitalism conditions began to change by degrees, though the theory was yet adhered to. But the time has come when, conditions having been wholly changed, the theory itself is now boldly repudiated. By construing the conduct of the officers of the American Railway Union as potential, if not actual treason, Judge Grosscup¹ correctly enunciates the theory that the political power, the government of the land, no longer belongs to the whole people, but to the property-holding minority among them; that the interests of these are the interests of the government; that an attack upon these is an attack upon the government; that, in short, the sovereignty of the nation no longer resides in the people, but actually in the capitalist class.

That this has not always been so, either in fact or in theory, Judge Grosscup's charge to the Federal Grand Jury clearly indicates. He speaks of “great changes” that have taken place, he alludes to the “grave problems” these changes have given birth to, and he announces the necessity of solving these problems “courageously,” whereupon he forthwith

proceeds to solve one of these problems — on behalf and in the interest of the class which he recognizes as the ruling one, the class in which his practiced eye discerns political power and governmental authority, of which he is a limb.

No previous discussion here, no new shaking of the cards or consultation with the people who have been holding a different view. The capitalist class is in power, the capitalist class is sovereign; all constitutions, laws, and guarantees repugnant to existing conditions must give way and accommodate themselves to the fact. To rise against capital is treason — the doer of such a deed is stripped of all civil rights; his mail may be violated, his house searched without warrant. The class that rules dictates the law.

These lessons have been preached before, and before this have they been exemplified by events of the day. But never before have they been preached with the voice of thunder and the peal of musketry that recently went forth from Chicago.

With the closing of this railroad strike a new and promising era is opened in the history of the Social Revolution in America. This era will be the last. May it be short. The times are ripe. The capitalist social system can no longer buckle its distempered cause within the belt of reason.

May the next century dawn, as it promises, upon an emancipated America.

Presented by the National Humanities Center, Research Triangle Park, NC, 2005.

¹ On July 10, federal judge Peter Grosscup had defined the crimes of insurrection and conspiracy to the grand jury impaneled to consider charges against the American Railway Union strikers.