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EDITORIAL

## THE MESSAGE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**I**T was a shrewd man who said: “If you want to conceal a public document, publish it among other public documents”—no one will read it. It was another equally shrewd man who said: “If you want to conceal what you mean, write volubly and interminably about it”—no one will understand it. The President<sup>1</sup> has merged these two shrewd thoughts. The product of the merger in his annual message—the longest yet, even for him. The annual message of the year 1907 will sink like a lump of lead into the depths of oblivion—unread, un-understood, as it desires to be.

Nevertheless, even lead, when it sinks into water, sends up some bubbles to the surface. A few of these may be caught “on the wing,” before they burst.

One of these “bubbles” is the recommendation for the “compulsory investigation of industrial disputes.” As is usual with all such recommendations, it comes accompanied with an oily smirk. The compulsory investigation is to be conducted “in the interest alike of the employer and the employee.” If capitalist society is anything it is impartial; if capitalist officials have one quality more pronounced than any other it is their even-handed justice towards Capital and Labor. True enough, Adam Smith had and expressed a different opinion on the subject. As recently quoted in these columns, the great Scotchman said: “Whenever the legislature attempts to regulate the differences between master{s} and their workmen, its counsellors are always the masters.”<sup>2</sup> But Adam Smith must have been a slanderer, a “mudslinger,” etc., etc.

Another “bubble” is a diminuendo growl (the growl was “fortissimo” two years ago, it came down to “piano” last year, now it has become “pianissimo”) on how “the

<sup>1</sup> [Theodore Roosevelt.—R.B.]

<sup>2</sup> [Wealth of Nations, Book I, Chapter 10, Part 2.—R.B.]

presence of women in industry reacts with extreme directness upon the character of the home and the family life” and how “the conditions surrounding the employment of children bear a vital relation to our future citizenship.” In view of which—shall the felony be stopped?—bless our souls, no!—in view of which the matter shall be submitted to a “comprehensive investigation.” Like “charity organizations,” whose main object is to furnish soft berths to idle relatives and retainers of the capitalist contrivers, “investigations” are just pap for investigators. When that particular clause was read in Congress more than one Congressman with “pull” did undoubtedly lick his chops in anticipation of the glorious junketings he expects to enjoy as a member of that “Comprehensive Investigating Committee.”

Yet a third “bubble” is the weeps over the circumstance that “the number of accidents to wage workers has become appalling in the mechanical, manufacturing and transportation operations of the day,” accompanied by the suggestion for an “automatic” system by which to secure the payment for accidents by the employer, without the intervention of Congress and lawsuits. An “automatic” system of redress takes its place beside such chimeras as the “quadrature of the circle” and “perpetual motion.”

Woe would be the Working Class—male, female and child—if its salvation depended upon schemes for settling strikes, “Comprehensive Investigating Committees,” “automatic” methods of redress, and other capitalist Presidential bubbles.

He who would be free himself must strike the blow.

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

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