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# Who is the Destroyer of Liberty?

by Elmer T. Allison †

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A few months ago the words “Liberty and Freedom” were moving words. Today they are dead — except in the minds of the world’s oppressed. Then, the world was passing through a saturnalia of blood. A rallying cry was necessary to lead on the peoples to more sacrifice and slaughter. An ideological aspect must be put upon the face of struggle. What better catch-phrase than “Liberty” could be sounded in the ears of the victims of capitalistic world imperialism?

But hypnotized labor [came] to expect the practical application of the precepts of liberty to their everyday lives and to industrial conditions. They accepted without question the promises of their leaders. They bled and sacrificed without end that the ideals which were held aloft by the sponsors of war might live afterward. How bitter is the disappointment! Today, the workers of the world, with the exception of Russia, are ground to bits beneath the iron heel of despotism. Of all nations, the workers of the United States are ground down more pitilessly than any. Every single constitutional liberty has been and is now being denied them. That “bulwark of our liberties,” the constitution, has been shattered to bits by the hand of capitalistic interests. Free speech, free assembly are dead. The workers are disfranchised. Berger has been denied the seat to which he was elected by a clear majority of 5,000 votes. Every citizen who

voted for Berger was disfranchised by the acts of the representatives of capitalistic interests in Congress. In New York, 5 Socialists have been denied their seats in the state assembly. The constitutional right of citizens to elect representatives of their choice has been violated by capitalistic interests. The destructionist is at work in every field and always it is the same influence that stands in the background.

Because of the work of this arch-enemy of liberty, nearly a half million steelworkers have been forced back to their toil — underpaid, overworked, and denied even the right to form organizations for forcing concessions from their organized employers. The steel strike in an eloquent page in the history of the rise of American capitalist influence over the historic “rights” of American workers and citizens. In every steel center, the heavy hand of oppression came down upon the workers with violence. Every vestige of personal and constitutional liberty was ruthlessly stamped into the mire. Meetings of the steelworkers were broken up by armed violence and uniformed thugs. Men and women were murdered outright and no bones made of it. The steel strike was lost because slavery was imposed upon the strikers by the armed power of the state at the behest of Gary and his associates in plunder.

The Constitution was an obstruction in the

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path of capitalistic imperialism, and because it was so, it has been wrecked to bits. It has been cast upon the scrap heap of history and now marks a milestone along the path which capitalism has passed. It can never be rebuilt. It will never again serve as a refuge of the working class of America. It cannot be used as a weapon for their defense against the employing class. In the struggle of Labor for mastery of the world, it cannot be revived as an implement to further its rise to power. The Constitution is dead — it can no longer be said to exist.

Capitalism knows no law but the law of its own will. It will without a quiver wreck its own laws when they stand in its way. It acknowledges but one law — the law of force. The workers must forge new weapons if they would win against entrenched and powerful capital. We know now that we can never win by merely “gaining 51% of the ballots.” We now that capitalism has no more respect for majorities than it has for minorities. Labor must give all its activities for shorter hours and higher wages a revolutionary meaning. It must quit quibbling over these things merely as such. Labor must recognize that in order to live humanely, it must control the means by which it lives. It must take out of the hands of capital the power to control production. It must take out of the hands of capital its unearned possession of the machinery of production. To live, Labor must rule. And to rule, it must cease depending upon the “rights” given by dead constitutions. It must by force of its invincible numbers write a Constitution in which only they who labor shall share.

*Edited with a footnote by Tim Davenport.*

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