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EDITORIAL

LOOK OUT FOR WU!

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE Chinese Minister Wu has himself called himself a “Heathen Chinee” and “peculiar.” Perhaps, it was in that character that, answering at Carnegie Hall the question, Geographers say that China is rapidly drying up; must not the consequence of that be that the Chinese will emigrate in hundreds of millions? Wu said: “If China should, indeed, dry up, the population will dry up at the same time.”

Was it the “Heathen Chinee” who parried an ugly question? Or was it an ignoramus who answered?

Territories have run dry before now, but the people did not dry up with them. The great European migrations of nations from Central Asia are a great historic instance in point. The original homesteads of those people ran dry. The land rose and tipped, with the consequence that the water ran off. But the people did not stay and dry up. They ran off, or flowed off, with the water. As the land tipped westward, westward the people moved with bag and baggage. It was as if a plate is tipped: all its hard and liquid contents will be spilled. The tipping of the soil will spill both people and water. The former will not cling to the dry rock like helpless oysters.

The tipping of the soil in Central Asia a couple of thousand years ago and more, together with its consequence of turning water courses, had historic results of prime magnitude. That simple geologic fact sealed the fate of the Roman Empire, and carried in its womb the formation of modern Europe. Migration set in in the direction that the tipping of the land bade it. It was mass migration. Fleeing from death, the migration had to press upon other people lying to the west. Death was met and dealt in the process. Out of that struggle arose the history of the Dark, the Middle and the Modern Ages.

Minister Wu’s position is utterly unscientific. Being unscientific, it prevents

that foresight that it is the province of science to impart; it, as a consequence, also blinds the mind's eye to modern occurrences.

The foundation of man's acts lies in his material well-being. His sentiments, however lofty, are the reflexes of these material conditions. His love of country is the love for the place where he is happy. If a country "runs dry," the people will not stay there and dry up with it. A man may burn up in his own house; but that will happen only when it is physically impossible for him to get away. So anxious are men to leave their dearly beloved homes when these are on fire, that they have been known to leap out of fifth-story windows and break their necks—exactly the way we see so many emigrants from Europe do. Their own countries being ablaze with hunger, maltreatment and other woes, they rush headlong to America into the red-hot jaws of the many times more devouring American capitalist furnace.

He who is misled by Minister Wu's sociology will be a blind man threading his way through the tangle of modern conflicts. As to the past, to him that must be a riddle; as to the present, he would simply know nothing of it; as to the future—well, he would apprehend that as little as the moth that is born, breeds and dies in one day.

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

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