

EDITORIAL

## AN OPEN LETTER TO ROBERT M. THOMPSON.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**T**O Robert M. Thompson,  
Chairman Executive Council of the Navy League of the United States.  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Sir:—

After carefully considering your favor of January 15, requesting our co-operation with your League, together with the documents that you enclosed, we have come to the conclusion that the success of your League would go far to increase the perplexities that the country now finds itself in.

We do not believe that the national defence depends upon navies, or armies, either, for that matter:—

In the first place, the term “The Nation” needs definition. Large chunks of useful property lying in this nation, including vast areas of the country’s land, are owned abroad. The revenues yielded by the labor that is expended here at home upon these properties is, to a large extent, collected for people who owe an allegiance to the United States. More than once, when American Labor moved to preserve for itself a larger portion of this fruit of its toil, the military forces of the land were turned into “Hessians,” very much like the Crown of Great Britain did before our Revolution. What is there to prevent the Navy from being similarly operated—in the interest of a Nation of capitalists against the real Nation of the wage earners, or Working Class?

In the second place, we hold that a Nation’s real strength lies in an intelligently happy, free and manly population. Against that no “foreign” force can prevail; where that does not exist, no navy, however “powerful,” can make up for the deficiency.

Furthermore:—

We can not accept the sweeping statement: “Battleships are cheaper than battles.” The motto is misleading. Experience teaches that battleships, so far from preventing battles, more frequently are incentives thereto. The navy officers desire to “make good.” Peace rather causes them to look like superfluous luxuries. War justifies their jobs. Every time when friction has arisen between the commercial interests of capitalists located in America and capitalists located abroad, it was from Navy quarters especially that attempts have proceeded to inflame the public mind in favor of “hostilities.” It was so under Harrison in the matter of Chile; it was so under Cleveland in the matter of the British boundary line in Guyana; it was so under the same Cleveland in the matter of Italy’s complaint anent the New Orleans Lynching-bee; it was so under McKinley in the matter of Cuba. And so all along the line. The \$130,000,000 cost of the Navy for 1912, which you consider a “cheap insurance against the cost of war,” we consider a gigantic prod for war, accordingly, a huge waste of wealth with which to waste more wealth.

Finally, we can not accept as authentic the list of “services that have been rendered by the navy outside the sphere of war”:—

A careful scrutiny of the list reveals the fact that, out of its fifteen items, at least twelve could have been attended to better, more profitably, and more in keeping with the standards of civilization, had they been attended to with ships free from the burden of instruments of destruction, and that the remaining items had better not have been attended to at all. The instance of the Panama iniquity, aided and abetted by the Navy, fittingly characterizes these other “services.”

To state our position frankly, with all the frankness that the occasion demands, not only must the organ of the Socialist Labor Party withhold its support from, it is in duty bound to oppose your League with all the power of the Party’s agitational, educational and organizing efforts.

Very respectfully,

EDITOR DAILY PEOPLE.

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