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EDITORIAL

To Be Remembered for When the Time Comes

By DANIEL DE LEON

Who is there who has not come across the following and similar statements:
“What! do you propose to confiscate the property of the capitalists?”

“Socialism means to transfer to {the} thriftless the fruit of industry.”

“We demand the protection of the strong arm of the Law for the property that our industry and our intelligence has accumulated.”

Last week has disclosed two incidents by the light of which the above ejaculations must be studied.

In the first place it turns out that the Federal Government is annually robbed of \$10,000,000 by the railroads. It is done in this way: Every four years the Government causes the cars carrying mails to be weighed. Upon the weight thus ascertained, the amount is fixed which the Government pays the railroads for carrying the mails. Now, then, the railroad managers cause the mails to be fraudulently padded at the time when the Government weighing is done. The excessive weight thus fraudulently given to the mail becomes the basis of Government payments. As soon as the amount of payment is settled by Congress, the padding ceases. The railroads thus draw payment for services they do not render. The steal amounts to gigantic figures.

In the second place, it is now discovered that the East River Gas Company has swindled the city out of fully \$50,000 during the last three years. Its charter of incorporation provided for a payment to the city of 3 per cent. of its receipts. This amount is quietly pocketed under both the Tammany and the Reform Government of the city.

The millions stolen from the Government by the railroads, the percentages withheld from the people by the East River Gas Company, are samples of the “property” that capitalism holds; the methods adopted by these bodies to appropriate property illustrate the nature of the “thrift,” “industry” and “intelligence” that serve as means for capitalist accumulations.

“Confiscation,” indeed! This word, on the lips of the brigand class that now rules the nation, has all the flavor it would emit from the lips of the highway robber, who, caught in the act, would protest against his plunder being returned to the plundered by invoking the aid of the “strong arm of the Law to prevent the fruits of his thrift, industry and intelligence from being transferred to the thriftless.”

The two instances here mentioned are but a drop in the bucket of the plunder of capitalism. Were the people’s parliament in session, and were it to appoint a committee to appraise the value of the capitalist industries, to the end that the people may buy them off, strange results would be reached. After all the watered stock and other fraudulent fictitious values are wrung out; after all the payments, due the Government and fraudulently withheld from it are deducted; then there might be left a balance of a nickel coming to the capitalists, that is to say, to the few, if any, who would not have to be thrown into prison, there to atone for the manifold crimes that pave the way to capitalist predominance.

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

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