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EDITORIAL

“BUSTING” THE TOBACCO TRUST.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE United States has filed its suit against the \$230,000,000 Duke Tobacco Trust, involving no less than sixty-five constituent companies, and twenty-nine prominent individuals.

The bill of the suit, drawn up by special assistant U.S. Attorney General, James C. McReynolds, is a masterly one. It details the every-man's-hand-at-every-man's-throat policy by which the giant Trust has been reared. It tells of the oppressive attacks, the ferocious competition, the unfair trade methods, which made up the Trust's "business integrity" towards its rivals. It lays bare the conspiracies and underhand deals by which the Trust has secured the whip hand on the directing boards of its competitors, and throttled them. It exposes the secrecy as to their ownership of controlled companies, and the cloak of "independence" behind which the organizers of the Trust have worked, to defraud the public, cripple existing competitors, and keep out from the field new ones. It goes at length into the false statements and misrepresentations habitually indulged in by the Trust towards the out-put of rival concerns. It tells the story of ruinous cutting of prices, in many instances far below the cost of production, and the underground manipulation of markets, all with a view to promoting that competition which capitalist apologists declare to be "the life of trade." And finally, having traced through a history of business rapine and ruin the career of the Tobacco Trust as producer and wholesaler, McReynold's bill does likewise with its career as retailer, with the inception and development of the United Cigar Stores Co. In short, the bill against the Duke Trust is as complete an expose of the "ch__e" {"choice"?}¹ methods of modern American capitalism as could be wished.

¹ [Type damaged in *Weekly* as well as the *Daily*.—R.B.]

But the bill goes further; it asks for reliefs against the Trust. It asks the restraint of the constituent companies from engaging in inter-state or foreign commerce under the present organization; it asks that all contracts and conspiracies be declared illegal, and that they be not carried out; it asks that the Trust be dissolved, and that the monopoly in the tobacco business be wiped out.

When a man’s prosperity is attacked, it is his cue to fly to its defense. When a business concern is smitten to the death, its stockholders rush to unload. Is Wall Street doing either? No; the street is quiet; there is no panic on the market, not even on tobacco. The street has learned that Rooseveltian “attacks on the Trusts” are idle, much as the headlong assault of the Knight of la Mancha on certain windmills. The big business interests, while naturally resenting the interference of the Big Stick in the business methods rendered imperative by capitalism, which the Big Stick itself upholds, are no longer scared into a seven-day’s ague at a suit or even a decision against them. They realize that they are the outcome of centuries of industrial and commercial development, and cannot be curbed, cannot be headed off, cannot be “busted,” without pitching the race back into primitive chaos. This calamity the Trusts, with exquisite good judgment, knows the race will not inflict upon itself. The race is but waiting for the opportune moment to avail itself of the useful organizing work done by the Trusts, by stepping itself into control of them, and declaring the Socialist Republic.

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