

EDITORIAL

THE TARIFF BILL SIGNED.

By DANIEL DE LEON

NOTWITHSTANDING the question of taxation—a question involved in tariffs—is not a question that concerns the workers, seeing that the graft practiced upon them is a graft that is consummated in the shops, this notwithstanding, the tariff bill, which this extra session of Congress was convened to pass, has been rich in opportunities to expose that peculiar immorality that Lassalle so well said typifies every reactionary class.

The opportunities started with the opening of the debates in the House; they continued to spring up when the bill reached the Senate; and they cropped up at the moment when the last finishing touch was put upon it by the signature of the President.

The bill contains thousands of items. The theory upon which the bill is builded is that of protecting the domestic manufacturer by insuring to him “a reasonable profit.” As a matter of course perfection can not be expected in such a structure. Nothing human is perfect, let alone so complicated a thing as a bill that deals with a thousand conflicting interests. But the bill suffers from worse than inevitable imperfection. In a number of schedules, the hide and the textile ones, as instances, the bill raises the duties enormously. Already these concerns are deriving huge profits. Their dividends are monstrous, and the salaries that they pay their pet directors, in order to make the dividend look less startling, are princely. It is no “imperfection,” it is crime in the shape of fraud that the schedules on most of the items are guilty of. And these frauds typify the bill. This notwithstanding, the President of the United States, in attaching his signature to the bill and thereby vitalizing it into law, says in its justification: “The bill is not a perfect tariff bill, or a complete compliance with the promises made,” but that it could not be otherwise “in respect to a subject matter involving many schedules and thousands of articles.”

This is a familiar tune on capitalist lips. The present social system “is not a perfect” thing, say they (we should stutter!), “but,” they ever add, “in so complicated a thing as a social system, involving so many thousands of considerations, perfection is unattainable.” And thus, under the pretext that perfection is unattainable, they cover, they nourish, they incite and they profit by crime rampant.

So does the capitalist act in the shop; so does he act in society; so does he act in private life;—and so does his chief political exponent deport himself in the White House.

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