

EDITORIAL

THE “SOCIAL VIEW OF THE SUBJECT.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

EXAMINED before the Stanley Congressional Committee concerning the high prices that he had been demanding for steel rails, Andrew Carnegie said:

“I was in the business of making money, and wanted the highest prices I could get. If I wanted to sell for \$50 and the consumer was satisfied to buy at that price, that wouldn’t be unfair, would it?”

Buying and selling, with the capitalist, are obverse and reverse of the same medal. The ethics that guide him in the one transaction guide him in the other. Money-making being the capitalist’s business—

When he sells he does all that is in his power to place the purchaser at his mercy. Having succeeded in that, and the purchaser finding himself, through market manipulations, compelled to pay, say, \$50 for what should fetch a smaller price, then the capitalist unctuously shrugs his shoulders, and, turning his eyes skyward, asks; “If I want to sell for \$50 and the consumer is satisfied to buy at that price, that is not unfair, is it?”

When he buys, say, labor-power, the capitalist likewise does all that he can, and he can not a little, to place the seller, the workingman, at his mercy. Having succeeded in this; having dieted the workingman into acquiescent hunger to be ready to work at starvation wages, our capitalist then puts on an extra coating of sanctimoniousness, humanity, innocence and helplessness, and, double turning his eyes skyward, asks: “If the seller is satisfied to sell at next to nothing and I buy at that price, that is not unfair, is it?”

According to the latest terminology and technique of bourgeois economists, to find fault with such “fairness” is to take “the unsocial view of a subject”; to accept such “fairness” as the proper thing is to recognize “the social view of the subject.”

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