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FIRST EDITORIAL

GAMBLING AND SUICIDE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

DR. Hillis says that “gamblers are suicides.” He fails to make a distinction between gamblers and gamblers. The man who risks his week’s pay in a game, the man who involves property intrusted to him by another person, or the man who has a “sure method to break the bank” may be a suicide, but there are always two sides to a game, as there are two sides to an argument. Were gambling a game of chance, or of skill, each player would have an equal show of winning. But gambling is not a game of chance, excepting in church prize whist exhibits, or in the select family circles that gather for a quiet little rubber. There is not a square house in New York. Those who run the game do not go broke, and consequently have no need of indulging in suicide. It is the man who goes against the game who loses, and had he the saving mark of common sense, he would not go against the game. He is the brother of the man with a little money, who desires to go into business in a small way, and from that grow to affluence. He has no chance against the trust, not because he lacks business brains—a far different thing from intellect—but because he is battering his head against a solid wall, and is trying to beat a combination that is fixed. Business failure leads to more suicides, and more misery, than gambling ever did.

It was with special reference to Wall street that Dr. Hillis spoke. He rightly called speculation by its real name of gambling. But he did not understand the gamblers. There is just as much chance of playing an honest game in Wall street as there is of playing an honest game in the gambling houses of the city. The conditions under which you play are fixed before you ante. Men do not retire to the “inside” for their health, and they allow as little as possible of that which is conducive to their well being to escape them. They know the turn that stocks will take, and they follow the turning and twisting accurately. Where so much fresh money comes in, there will naturally be a few winners who are not running the game. It is axiomatic among gamblers that the house finally gets everything. It has its rake-off and it has its gains from play. So it is in Wall street. When you have

ventured your money, it will either be shaved down to a thin slice, or it will be taken away bodily.

Wall street cannot lose, and by Wall street is meant the capitalist class, the militant, aggressive, depredating capitalist, who is strong to seize and strong to hold. You may throw the whole of the money available against him, but by his control of the machinery of government, and of industry, he can do more fixing of stock quotations in five minutes than the whole rouge et noir gentry could do on their boards in centuries. Dr. Hillis and such as he, are among the methods employed in making the capitalist game sure for one set of players. With them the capitalist can turn himself an ace and his opponent a deuce every time. Hillis may or may not realize this, but he should watch his contribution box as it circulates next Sunday, and he will gain a neat lesson in the use of clergymen.

The reputed winners are like followers of the shell man. They win large sums of money when a possible player is in sight, or they are reputed to have won large sums. Instead of the shell man who discourses affably on the "fairness" of the game, we have in Wall street the newspapers which chronicle the winners. It is good business policy to keep the losers out of sight.

Gambling is not suicide. There is a side to it that means wealth and a front pew. There is a side to it that means "true American push and energy." There is a side to it that entitles the person on that side to appear before the Y.M.C.A. and church societies for the purpose of telling the members to be good to their employers. There is also another side where the chances are 1,000 to 1 against winning. On that side there may be suicides, but a man who would accept such desperate odds in anything deserves no better fate.

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

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