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EDITORIAL

PROFESSOR GREEN GOODS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

A CERTAIN magazine, which, for a moment, we shall leave unnamed, addresses itself against the Socialist claim that modern legislation is class legislation, capitalist class legislation, in the interest of capitalism. It argues this way:

“There are hardly any laws made in this country in the interest of capital; on the contrary, the whole trend of legislation is against capital. Witness the Congress that has just adjourned. The greatest part of its time was taken up in discussing measures against trusts and corporations.”

It will be noticed that the “argument” carefully avoids setting up the claim that legislation is in favor of labor. That claim, once common, has been knocked so completely into a cocked hat that the magazine in question does not care to set up a target so clear and distinct that it can be hit. Its argument is therefore negative. The color of “Labor Legislation” having “washed out,” what is now attempted is the color of “Anti-capitalist Legislation.” The only difference in meeting and overthrowing this present dodge, when compared with the former false claim of “Labor Legislation” is the difference between attacking a wriggling snake and attacking a bold wolf. The “Labor Legislation” claim was a bold, brazen lie; this “Anti-capitalist Legislation” is a sneaking false pretence.

The discussions in Congress have been extensively “on measures against trusts,”—watch the snake wriggling. Is a discussion against trusts necessarily a discussion against capitalism, i.e., against the system that exploits the non-property classes by the property classes? Assuredly not. It is no more that than a discussion against a highway robber is necessarily a discussion against highway robbery. A discussion against a highway robber is one against highway robbery only when the criminal is at the bar of justice, before which he is arraigned simply as an exponent of

highway robbery, and what really is at the bar is the crime itself. When, however, the “discussion” is conducted between him and a lot of petty robbers, who seek, not the abolition of robbery, but the curbing of the big fellow, who stands in the light of the petty robbers,—when that is the case, it takes a very elaborate dealer in green goods to venture the claim that the discussion is against robbery. And that is just the case with the above quotation.

The smaller capitalist interests have been assailing trusts, never capitalism. Without exception, the discussions in Congress and the laws passed have been in the interest of capital, not infrequently in the interest of trust capital. The Cuban treaty, the sugar schedules, the Panama Canal treaty and so down the list are acts of Congress passed with an eye single upon the promotion of capital and capitalism, with labor left wholly out of consideration. Not until the working class shall have class-consciously conquered the public powers will legislation cease to be in the interest of capital, because only then will capitalism itself be in the criminal’s dock.

The name of the magazine is now in season. It is *Gunton’s Magazine*, the property of a gentleman known to fame as a forger of statistics, a falsifier of quotations and a protege of capitalists to throw dust into the eyes of the workingmen, for all of which reasons he is generally known, not by his one-time name of Professor George Gunton, but by the name of Professor Green Goods.

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