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EDITORIAL

LO, A CLOWN!

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE latest contribution to the Tumbling-Jack style of reasoning that utterly disproves, disposes of, and throws Socialism upon the rubbish heap, comes from the New York *Sun*. With balloon-trousers inflated, clown's cap tipping to one side, and face tattooed into a grin, the *Sun's* economist tumbles into the arena with this argument in justification of capitalism and trituration of Socialism:

“This [the Socialist principle] is disputed, if not utterly disproved by the fact that where there is limited capital there is limited production, and where there is limited production there is dire and general poverty.”

If that style of reasoning holds good, why not this other:

“There was no rotten meat canned and sold as ‘Jewel’ among the Indians; there is an unlimited quantity of rotten meat canned and sold as ‘Jewel’ in America. The quantity of wealth among the Indians was limited, among them there was dire and general poverty; in America the quantity of wealth is plentiful;—therefore, the canning and selling of rotten meat is the cause of plentiful wealth.”

Or this other:

“There are, among the Makololo of Central Africa, no railroad magnates who own stock in industries and thereby are able to undersell producers who do not own railroads, ruin them, drive them to suicide and confiscate their property; in America there are stacks of such railroad magnates, in fact, ‘they all do it,’ ply the trade of ruining other folks. The quantity of wealth among the Makololo is limited, among them there is dire and general poverty; in America the quantity of wealth is plentiful;—therefore, the ruining of other people by railroad magnates is the cause of plentiful wealth.”

Or this other:

“Look at a certain island in the Pacific, it consists of a rock 2x4 miles, with not a soul living on it. A careful census of the place has brought out the fact that there is not a Depew{,} not a McCall, not a Barnes, not a Roosevelt, in short, or in full, there is not on it a single capitalist who cheats, commits perjury, violates all laws of God and man, nor is there a single President and his assistant secretary who either applauds the shooting of women and children after battle, or ‘drags them out’, like Mrs. Minor Morris was dragged out from the President’s vestibule; in America there are plenty of these folks; indeed, all our capitalists are tarred with the same stick, and our politicians ditto. On the said island in the Pacific there is not a penny’s worth of wealth; in America the wealth is fabulous;—therefore, cheating, committing perjury, violating the law of God and man, and outraging womanhood is the cause of plentiful wealth.”

“Capital” is the privately owned giant implement of production, brought into existence by Labor and stolen from Labor by the Capitalist Class. It is not the thief character, which to-day attaches to the necessaries of wealth-production, in other words, it is not the “capital”-feature of the implements of production, that renders wealth plentiful. What renders wealth plentiful is the toil of the Working Class applied to those implements of production. What the private ownership, that is, the “capital”-feature of the necessaries of wealth production does is, first{,} to keep down the quantity of wealth that could be produced, provided the machinery of production were freed from its present private ownership, its “capital”-feature; secondly, to corner the bulk of that wealth into hands of the cheating and law breaking capitalist class, leaving the toilers in abject misery and dependence.

The arena of capitalist reasoning has become an arena of tumbling clowns.

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

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