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EDITORIAL

THE GIFTS OF CAPITALISTS.

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THERE is considerable discussion now going on in certain religious periodicals in regard to the acceptance of gifts of money from capitalists who have acquired wealth by what are considered as questionable methods, by colleges, universities and churches. One side to this discussion holds that such gifts are immoral, as they are the products of capitalist wrong-doing and compel their recipients to become its apologists and upholders, to the detriment of society. The other side, while admitting that such gifts may have their source in such wrong-doing, deny that their acceptance implies a contract to uphold this wrong-doing.

They contend that, considering the circumstances of the times, such gifts are productive of great good to education, philanthropy and religion, and, therefore, moral.

To the Socialist onlooker this discussion involves not only the morality or immorality of such gifts, but the morality or immorality of capitalism itself. This becomes clear when the source of those gifts and its *raison d'être* are examined and disclosed.

To the moralist in the above discussion these gifts are the products of political, legislative and judicial bribery and unfair competition, such as spring from railroad rebates and other means of economic discrimination, not to mention criminal acts perpetrated against the property of competitors—all in the interests of consolidation and monopoly. This is the source. But from whence does it come? Plainly from capitalism itself.

Capitalism originally was industry carried on by means of labor-exploitation and competition. Capitalism was then planless. This accentuated its primary feature, based on the robbery of the working class, and both together culminated in “overproduction,” crisis and bankruptcy. These factors served to make capitalism unprofitable. From this

rose a demand for the elimination of at least one of them, viz. {,} competition, by means of combination. Could combination be attained by moral means? Could it be attained through political, legislative and judicial purity? Experience proved that it could not. Then bribery and “unfair competition” became inevitable and combination prevailed. Morality, which is shaped by material interests and which does not, as erroneously supposed, shape material interests, had to take shape from the new conditions thus created. That the new conditions are triumphing over it, the discussion referred to proves.

To the Socialist, reasoning from the material basis of morality, the moralist who demands the retention of a system based on labor exploitation and competition, is less moral than the moralist who defends the acceptance of gifts from a system based on labor-exploitation only. The morality of the first is reactionary: it would revive a condition which is past revival. It therefore strives to turn back evolution and in so doing would threaten the existence of society. The morality of the second is revolutionary. It leads to that economic condition in which the working class, also actuated by material interests, will inaugurate a still higher morality by “expropriating the expropriators,” by abolishing labor-exploitation and establishing Socialism!

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

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