

EDITORIAL

GETTING SCAPEGOATS READY.

By DANIEL DE LEON

TO judge by the speech delivered in Frankfort, Ky., on February 20, by Gov. Judson Harmon of Ohio to the Kentucky Legislature, the day may yet come when Socialist Science will have to take under the protection of its wings the class-conscious political agents of capitalism fleeing before the wrath of the sentimentalists of their own class, egged on by the capitalist head and front of the offending.

Governor Harmon imputed the discontent that is surging from all quarters of the compass to the misconduct of present public agencies. No doubt, some of the grievances, indeed, many, are due to official misconduct, but not all, leastwise the principal ones.

Socialist economics teach that, even if the capitalist paid the worker for the full value of his labor-power, even then would the capitalist make profits, that is, appropriate to himself the fruit of the labor of another. For parallel reason, even if the political agencies of the capitalist class were guilty of no misconduct, discontent is bound to arise.

The circumstance that the capitalist pays his employes far below the value of their labor-power is merely an abuse of his class-rule. Such abuse intensifies and accelerates the degradation of the wage earner; the abuse, however, would not be possible if the original evil did not exist, to wit, capitalist class-power. Having the class-power to withhold from the employe a large portion of the fruit of the employe's toil, even if he were paid the full value of his labor-power, the capitalist class abuses the same.

Similarly with the public, or political agencies of the capitalist class. Without abusing their power, the political agencies of capitalism can not choose but bear heavily upon the worker. They would not be true to their class if they did not: the

existence of capitalism is synonymous with the suffering of the workers. Having the power to abuse their class functions, the political agencies of Capital frequently do so. With them also such abuse intensifies and accelerates discontent; it does not create discontent; the discontent is created by the very existence of capitalism itself.

Of all this the capitalist knows, of course, nothing. 'Tis to his interest not to know. Even without any misconduct on the part of his political agencies, the mere existence of the capitalist breeds, deepens, widens, multiplies discontent. A point is finally reached when the fires, long smouldering out of sight, break out into sight. The capitalist guilty? The capitalist the cause thereof? Perish the thought! A scapegoat must be found. Governor Harmon is taking time by the forelock and pointing him out.

There have been times when the masses, goaded into revolt by the exactions of the King's agencies, were actually pacified by the King's throwing his favorite out of the window to the clamoring crowd below. Even that sort of dodge "will no longer wash." The agencies of class rule can do no more than Cæsar's arm when Cæsar's head is off. The cause of the discontent is not the acts, even when downright criminal, committed by the agencies of Capital. The cause of discontent is the Capitalist System—that cause must go.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded March 2013

slpns@slp.org