

EDITORIAL

WRONG EITHER WAY.

By DANIEL DE LEON

IN the course of his inaugural address Gov. Sulzer said:

“It is only just that those who do the work should receive an equitable share of that which they have helped to produce.”

The Governor was referring to the wage earners. From whatever angle of view the Governor’s words are scanned the principle they convey is wrong.

Does the Governor mean the whole working class as “those who do the work”? Then nothing short of the whole of that which they produce is “equitable.” The very mention of the word “share” in that connection is unequitable. To him who produces does the whole product of his labor belong. The working class being the sole producer, no share can be “equitably” doled out to it. The full product should plump into its hands for its fruition. Did they not “do the work”? Or is wealth the reward of idleness?

On the other hand, does the Governor mean by “equitable share” that “those who do the work” and who collectively receive the whole product, should be individually paid unequally, shares of different sizes being dealt out to the individuals? In this connection also the term “equitable” is repulsive, doubly so.

It is, first, repulsive to reason. The thing which is impossible is not unequitable. If the total result of the joint social labor is not large enough to furnish an ample share to all, then an equal share for each is simply impossible; then society is still held in the inevitable clutches of class rule; then the day of economic equality has not yet dawned; then neither the term “equitable” nor the term “un-equitable” applies; then what happens may be and is distasteful—“unequitable” it can not be termed, because better conditions are physically impossible; leastwise may it be termed “equitable.” There is nothing “equitable” in the act of amputating a limb

whose amputation is necessary to save life. The term that is applicable is “dire necessity.”

The term “equitable” is also repulsive to morals. The good act which is possible is not necessarily “equitable.” Only he who has the choice between good and evil, and chooses good is “equitable.” If the total result of the joint social labor is ample enough to furnish an abundance to all, then an equal share for each is possible, and the guaranteeing of such equal shares to each is not an “equitable” act on the part of society; it is Society’s bounden duty.

Whichever way it is looked at, Gov. Sulzer’s conception of “equitable” as the conception transpires from his words, is absolutely wrong.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded June 2014

slpns@slp.org