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EDITORIAL

GLEANINGS FROM CONGRESS— ROOT AND TOBACCO.

By DANIEL DE LEON

ONE day in May Representative Stanley had the floor in Congress and utilized his time with an exposé of the American Tobacco Company. The exposé covered a wide range.



AUGUSTUS OWSLEY STANLEY
(1867–1958)

Mr. Stanley went into the details of the Company's methods to throttle competition. Among other things he showed it was the Company's custom to give away cigarettes, or tobacco, if necessary, to prevent sales by independent manufacturers; furthermore, the Company owns seventy-five brands of cigarettes and one hundred brands of plug tobacco, yet it refuses to sell any of these brands to dealers who will not agree not to handle any other than their goods. Mr. Stanley did not limit himself to these rather stale charges, stale because they are so well known to be common to all Trusts, but he proceeded to uncover portions of the ulcer that are not quite so generally known to be habitual practices with our "Social Pillars." Mr. Stanley charged the Company with sailing perilously near the criminal code. In order to secure a navy contract the Company went to the Navy Department with Drummond & Co., and swore that Drummond & Co. were independent dealers, and that "in order to escape the penitentiary in Missouri both swore that Drummond & Co. had no corporate entity," the fact being that Drummond & Co. was but a fence for the Trust. Interesting as this bit of information is upon the moral structure of Saint Capital, it almost pales before the last words of Mr. Stanley. Said he: "I charge that the Trust had a

penitentiary thief on the stand in New York, and ELIHU ROOT AND OTHER GREAT LAWYERS WERE HIRED TO DEFEND HIM.” Mr. Stanley went into the details of the Company’s methods to throttle competition. Among other things he showed it was the Company’s custom to give away cigarettes, or tobacco, if necessary, to prevent sales by independent manufacturers; furthermore, the Company owns seventy-five brands of cigarettes and one hundred brands of plug tobacco, yet it refuses to sell any of these brands to dealers who will not agree not to handle any other than their goods. Mr. Stanley did not limit himself to these rather stale charges, stale because they are so well known to be common to all Trusts, but he proceeded to uncover portions of the ulcer that are not quite so generally known to be habitual practices with our “Social Pillars.” Mr. Stanley charged the Company with sailing perilously near the criminal code. In order to secure a navy contract the Company went to the Navy Department with Drummond & Co., and swore that Drummond & Co. were independent dealers, and that “in order to escape the penitentiary in Missouri both swore that Drummond & Co. had no corporate entity,” the fact being that Drummond & Co. was but a fence for the Trust. Interesting as this bit of information is upon the moral structure of Saint Capital, it almost pales before the last words of Mr. Stanley. Said he: “I charge that the Trust had a penitentiary thief on the stand in New York, and ELIHU ROOT AND OTHER GREAT LAWYERS WERE HIRED TO DEFEND HIM.”

Of course, it can not be expected of Mr. Stanley, himself an upholder of the capitalist system, and an objector only to the mischiefs of the upper capitalists against his own clients, the small fry or “independent” dealers, that he should have gone into the treatment bestowed by the Tobacco Trust upon its wage earners. To do that would have been to indict his own clients along with the Trust. Moreover, such is the caste spirit, that even capitalism foments, that employes “do not count” with a bourgeois. Even when the bourgeois seems thrilled with warmest indignation at the wrongs done him, he never has a thought for the wrongs he does the Working Class. That is not a “wrong,” it is “nat’r’l,” it is the “law of nat’r,” “always has been always will be, Amen.” As the life-wrecking treatment of employes is “nat’r’l” to Mr. Stanley he passed by that. Nevertheless, what he did say was valuable enough.

Elihu Root is to-day a distinguished political figure; he is a member of

President Roosevelt's cabinet; he is soon to undertake a trip to the South American Republics as the Nation's representative. He is about as conspicuous a figure as any in governmental capitalism—and yet (or, rather, just therefore) he takes fees from the Tobacco Trust as a lawyer to defend a penitentiary-thief limb of the Trust. The picture that Mr. Stanley unveils is worth contemplating. Elihu Root, who, when still young, made his “original accumulation” as the lawyer of Tweed, the plunderer of the city and State Treasury, now, in his maturer years, figures as the attorney for a criminal whom a Trust needs to carry out its “patriotic” work.

True, Mr. Stanley's speech was “lamentation.” True, Socialism does not “lament,” it organizes and acts. Yet, blessings on these “lamentations”! They are the acids, poured on the rock of capitalism, that help to disintegrate it, and render it more easily pervious to the pickaxe of the Socialist.

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