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EDITORIAL

## FIGHTING WIND-MILLS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**T**HE “atrocities” of the Tobacco Trust, as enumerated in the legal papers drawn against it by the Federal Attorney General, are an indictment, not of the Trust, they are an indictment of the intelligence of the Attorney General.

In a nutshell the tale told by the indictment is the tale of social progress. A large number of concerns had been cutting one another's throats. None was large enough to produce with that abundance that is the condition precedent for civilized life. Civilized life is out of the question for a nation so long as its time must be spent in grubbing for the necessaries of life. So long as man must spend his whole time in providing for these necessaries, the only difference between him and the brute is that the brute can never rise above the brute plane, whereas man may. The law of social progress is the increase of production to such abundance that man may enjoy security from want, and that leisure which alone can enable him to unfold the mental, spiritual and moral possibilities that lie latent in him. The Tobacco Trust wrought in this direction. The wheel-barrow race which the several concerns ran was gradually stopped. By degrees, efforts that interfered with production were uprooted; in their stead concentration of effort sprang up. Why does not the Trust set up this defence? The answer would illumine the obverse of the Trust and damn instead of acquitting the concern. The answer would damn not the Tobacco Trust only, it would damn capitalism.

The Trust, all Trust, is but a mechanical contrivance. There is essentially no difference between the best perfected Trust and the most perfect bit of machinery in production. The one and the other is big with possibilities for human happiness. Both are to-day a curse to the people—they are privately-owned. The private ownership of the Trust, like the private ownership of the machine, smites its

potential virtues. As necessary as the best machine is to production in any branch of industry, is also the Trust. He who owns neither becomes the slave of him who does. In private hands, the Trust, like the machine, is stripped of its virtues. It becomes a club over the head of the Nation—the smaller capitalists are hurled into the abyss of the wage slave: the wage slave mass become dumb, driven cattle.

No wonder the Tobacco Trust does not set up the only defence that would stand. Socialism will take care of that. Nor will it be the fault of Socialism that, in defending the Trust, Socialism is constrained to pillory the Trust owner. As inscrutable as the ways of Providence are the ways of Social Evolution. It is in the shell of private ownership that collective ownership is hatched. The shell of the egg is broken and cast away in order to make its contents serve their purpose. The shell of private ownership must be cracked—and will be.

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