

EDITORIAL

## “ECONOMIC DISTINCTIONS.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

**S**O rich in matter that must delight the “undesirable citizens” is the article of Mr. Frederic J. Whiting commented upon last week in these columns<sup>1</sup> that we must return to it once more.

In his defense of capitalism Mr. Whiting performs this sentence:

“Nothing pertaining to man is more self-evident than inequality of brain power and individual initiative. Consequently [mark the “consequently”], nothing is more absurd than the attempt to level by force of legislation the economic distinctions between man and man.”

Which is the same as to say: “Nothing pertaining to horses is more self-evident than inequality of color. Consequently, nothing is more absurd than to attempt by force of feeding to level the weight distinctions between horse and horse.”

Brain power in man is essentially an inherent, a natal quality. It may be cultivated, or it may be stunted. It is, nevertheless, born with man. “Economic distinctions” are essentially the work of legislation. No amount of legislation could impart brain power to the child born an idiot: on the contrary, without legislation to alter the fact, the babe of a Gould, or a Thaw, or a Corey would be economically undistinguishable from the babe born to any of the wage slaves who now bend under the weight of having to carry the Gould-Thaw-Corey class on their backs. “Economic distinctions” are not natal. They are not inherent. They are the creatures of legislation. As well deny that the weight of horses can be altered by feeding, on the ground that their color could not, as maintain that “economic distinctions” are parallel to brain power.

Mr. Whiting advances his theory against the “shallow philosophy” of the

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<sup>1</sup> [“‘Shallow Philosophy’ and ‘Mawkish Sentimentality,’” *Daily People*, June 15, 1907—R.B.]

“undesirable citizens.” Mr. Whiting’s philosophy may not be “shallow,” but then it is “transparently thin.” It is the “philosophy” of the “divine right” of monarchs—a “philosophy” that, in fact, is but a mystification, intended to befuddle the people with the notion that property is a sort of amber that oozes out of the pores of the capitalist class, like royalty was supposed to be an exhalation inherent in the breed of kings only.

Property, like royalty, is the creature of legislation. They are both the creature of man. What man sets up, man can pull down.

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

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