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EDITORIAL

GOOD FAITH—BAD FAITH.

By DANIEL DE LEON

LAUGHABLE as were the whole proceeding{s} of the Commercial Travelers' Interstate Congress in its attempt to woo back prosperity by protestation and winsome smiles, no single incident was more amusing than the speech delivered before the Congress on the 13th inst. by Comptroller Metz of the city of New York.

Even the sun has its bright spots, and the bright spot of Comptroller Metz's oration was the idea that dishonest business conditions could be eliminated by "competitors acting in good faith along the same lines."

Civilized men exchange greetings by offering for a handclasp the right hand—a custom originally intended to show there was no weapon hidden therein. A host among the plainsmen of South America, before offering a guest a drink, sips of the beaker himself—an act that would here be the height of impoliteness, but there is merely an indication that there lurks no poison in the beverage. Both these customs are relics of the days when men were physically against every other man; when death, rather than life, was to be expected from every stranger one met.

To-day, in advanced nations, the fight is no longer physical. The combat has been transferred from the bodily to the commercial field. Men fight for supremacy not with poison and dagger, but with cut prices, cheapened production, rebates, adulteration, false branding. "The gigantic trust with its ill-gotten millions and its tens of thousands of financial wrecks it has caused of men who dared to follow that line of business without its consent," is the present day descendant of the roving savage chief who split his enemy's head and carried off his goods. As with the savage any crime was permissible against one of another tribe, so now, any crime is permissible against a competitor. "Do unto others as you would they should do unto you" is heeded as little now as it was then. The rules of the game are still: "Fight";

and fight it is. The only “Good faith” known is the “Bad faith” not yet discovered.

What nonsense, then, to talk of good faith among competitors; and especially to commercial travelers, one of whom recently confessed himself and his fellow-drummers to be “the hired soldiers of the bygone age,” the mercenaries of past ages resurrected for the “struggle of competitive business.”

Good faith among competitors? Never again until the industries have been thrown open to all, when a plentiful livelihood is open to all, and the only competition is a competition in excellence and conscientiousness of social service. Only the Socialist can see into that haven—and Comptroller Metz, like Mr. Bryan, “is no Socialist.”

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

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