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EDITORIAL

BUTTERING TURNIPS.

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WHILE most of Gov. Hughes speech at the dedication of the Albany tuberculosis pavilion erected by the Central Federation of Labor of that city on the 28th inst. was mere commonplace that buttered no turnips, one passage of it stood out in bold relief from its dull background. It was, so to speak, rolling with butter. That passage reads:

“There are some who regard organized labor as a source of strife and a menace of difficulty. I regard it as a fine opportunity for the amelioration of the condition of men working with no other purpose than to make the most of themselves, and to achieve something for their families. . . . The mission of labor organizations is one of the finest that any association of men could guard.”

This sounds strange from Gov. Hughes. It is but two short years ago that President Roosevelt, now Hughes' political sponsor and backer in New York, denounced Moyer, Haywood and Pettibone as “undesirable citizens” for doing precisely what Hughes recommends so highly, namely, “ameliorating the condition of men” and “achieving something for their families.” It was precisely the stalwartness with which the Western miners had stood—despite guns and bullpens—for a betterment of their and their families' conditions, that called down upon the heads of their officers President Roosevelt's thunder. Yet Gov. Hughes raised no voice in their defence then.

Nor would he now. Gov. Hughes is not subject to a sudden conversion, like the milkman who went to church an “Immersionist” and came out a Universalist. He means now just what he would have meant in 1906, and he would have said in 1906 just what he says now. The speech and the silence of Gov. Hughes are not self-contradictory; each depicts one part of his opinion. Each is necessary to explain the

other, and complete the whole. Put them together, and Gov. Hughes' opinion becomes this:

“There are some who regard organized labor as a source of strife and a menace of difficulty,”—(but that is only “bad” organized labor.)

“I regard it as a fine opportunity for the amelioration” (but not the abolition)—“of the condition” (but that doesn't mean wage-slavery)—“of men working with no other purpose than to make the most of themselves and to achieve something for their families” (of course, this is to be done under such a system that the employer reaps three-quarters of their achievement).

“The mission of labor organizations” (Heavens, no, I don't mean the establishment of Socialism!)—“is one of the finest that any association of men could guard” (as long as they don't carry it too far); etc.

A man hears by what he knows. A sea yarn tells one thing to a weather-beaten tar and another to a green land-lubber. A speech on labor unions may mean one thing to the capitalistically trained Governor who utters it and another to the class conscious workingman who hears it. If only a dozen men in Gov. Hughes' Albany audience had sufficient class training to feel the real weight of the Governor's statement that “the mission of labor organizations is one of the finest that any association of men could guard”—if only a dozen men realized that the abolition of the wages system was the only mission of labor, and went away determined to work, day in, day out, for that goal, Gov. Hughes' speech will not have been in vain. That one passage will have helped butter the now butterless turnips of the whole working class.

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

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