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EDITORIAL

CLEAR THE DECKS!

By DANIEL DE LEON

JOHAN R. WALSH, ex-President of the Chicago National Bank, has been sentenced to five years' penal servitude in the penitentiary. Walsh, as president of the bank, loaned vast sums of the bank's deposits to private undertakings—manufacturing, railroad and mining—started and owned by himself. In other words, Walsh used his bank presidency to appropriate to his own uses the funds entrusted to his management. That was his offence, and for that he is now to suffer.

That Walsh's act was an immoral one need no argument. That he was guilty of moral turpitude is evident. Nevertheless the man is a martyr; in fact, he is made a scapegoat of.

What office-holding politician is there who is not equally guilty? From the President down to any municipal councilman, and criss-cross across all public offices, where is the incumbent who is clean of the identical turpitude for which Walsh's hair is to be cropped short, his whiskers shaved, and his anatomy covered with the striped suit of the penitentiary?

However large the salary of any office-holder may be, his savings are not enough to keep him after the expiration of his term. In many an instance it is publicly recognized that the salary is not enough to keep the incumbent even during his incumbency. This admission has been notably made with regard to our leading embassies abroad, the appointees to which, it is admitted, must have an "independent income." The long and short of the story is that office-holders must be investors of some sort—either they must be such to enable them to hold their office, or they must be such out of their savings during their terms. Now, then, there is no investment conceivable, whether it be in land, or stocks, or bonds, or factories, or mines, or railroads, or what not, that does not lean for its very existence upon the

Government. Separately and collectively, private productive property, or “capital,” rests upon Government collectively. Walsh made “loans” to himself. What do office-holders do but legislate or decree for themselves?

The case of Walsh is but a microscope magnification of an evil that is inherent in capitalist society. Walsh but acted obedient to the atmosphere of his social system. The man is a martyr, and the society that condemns him is but trying to make a scapegoat of the fellow. But the day is gone by when the sins of a people may be atoned by the blood of a goat. The deity that once presided over that sort of thing is gone forever. As Mason put it—as Nations can not be punished in another world, they are punished in this; by an inexorable chain of causes and effects Providence punishes National sins with National calamities.

Capitalist society will itself have to suffer for its own sins. No scapegoating will do.

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