

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 10, NO. 47.

NEW YORK, MONDAY, AUGUST 16, 1909.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

CLOSED, CLOSED, CLOSED!

By DANIEL DE LEON

TIS nice when a prisoner in the dock climbs into the rack, himself turns the screws on himself, drags his own confession from himself, and then declares “Here am I, self confessed, a criminal. Convict me!” That is the drama the National Methodist Federation for Social Service saw unrolled before it at its last meeting.

If there is one word more synonymous with “America” than any other, our friends the enemy would have us believe, that word is “opportunity.” “Go west, young man, go west,” said Horace Greeley a half century ago. “Go cityward,” the cry was in the late '90's. “Back to the land,” is now the slogan in the same quarters. But east, west, city, farm, wherever the illusive goddess is supposed temporarily to be sojourning, there, under her wings, is supposed to lie the chance for every man to make good in the struggle of life.

To make good, be it noted, means not merely to be “independent,” as some well-meaning folks put it, in the sense of not being a public charge. To make good means to establish a comfortable home, bring one's family up in peace, plenty, and a solid education, and to lay up a competence for old age. Anything short of that is a mockery of “making good.”

Now, then, it is a notorious fact, for which proof is superfluous, that no workingman can hope to make good, in that sense. Not to those who work, but to those who work the workers, do the prizes of wealth and comfort fall. As Lafargue put it, “Wealth is a certificate of labor performed—by others.” The workers, then, the vast majority of the population, are at once excluded from making good.

How fares it with the few favored ones, the exploiters of and spongers upon labor? At this point enter the witness, capitalism. He is incarnate in this instance in Mr. Hanford Crawford, manager of the St. Louis department store of Scruggs,

Vandervoort and Barney, and President of the Retail Merchants' Association of that city. Filing one abreast before the Methodist Federation aforementioned, he delivers an address. At the critical point he deposits himself carefully in the rack, gives the screws a pinch, and says:

“It still remains true that 90 per cent. of the men who go into business fail of success, and that only a small percentage ever achieve great success.”

The witness is excused. He has convicted himself.

Of the workers none can make good. Of the capitalists only 10 per cent. can, and of these only a small percentage can achieve great success.

What is it that keeps all the workers and the 90 per cent. of capitalists from reaching success? 'Tis the advanced tool owned by the remaining capitalist 10 per cent., who use it to grind down all those not possessing it.

“Closed, closed, closed!” echoes back from the doorway of opportunity; and capitalism stands self-convicted as the closer of it. Naught but the golden key of Socialism will ever open it again.

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

Uploaded by Donna Bills, October 2010

socialists@slp.org