

EDITORIAL

MISUSE OF TERMS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THEY both do it—the plutocrats at one end of the social ladder, the slums, or the submerged, at the other. Both seek, by queering a proper word, to give a color of justice to an improper act.

For instance—

Foremost among the plutocratic papers of the city and the land is the New York *Evening Post*. In its issue of December 26 it says:

“For every life ‘capital’ has destroyed the ordinary everyday man has destroyed his tens of thousands. We destroy them by typhoid when we fail to boil our drinking water; we destroy them by fire when we use common matches instead of safety matches; the mother destroys her child when she permits him to play near the fire, or near a window; we all destroy lives uncounted—not only our own, but those falling under our guardianship—by taking lightly the warnings of science about drinking cups, about dogs, about kissing, about most every act of human life”—which means that, if the capitalist is guilty of undermining and blotting out human lives, everybody else is guiltier, hence the capitalist is really guiltless.

At the other extreme of the social ladder, from the slums, the physically or mentally and morally submerged, rise a number of phrases:—

“Installment Expropriation,” a term, which, by queering the scientifically accurate term “Expropriation,” whereby the Socialist Movement means the masses re-entering into their own, gives a color of propriety to thievery.

“Free Love,” a term which, by queering morally and physically healthy love, gives a color of propriety to Lechery.

“Straight Jacket,” a term, which, by queering Integrity, is to give a color of reason to Swindle.

“Broadness,” a term, which, by queering Firmness of Purpose, is expected to

lend a color of sense to Political Corruption.

“Opportunism,” a term, which, by queering Political Commonsense, is used to give a color of wisdom to Sell-Outs.

“Joviality,” a term, which, by queering Sobriety, is used to convey a color of legitimacy to Drunkenness and Booze.

“Conspiracy,” a term, which, by queer(ing) Socialist Agitation, is sought to cloak homicidal plottings.

Etc., etc., etc.

By the misuse of the term to “destroy life” the plutocrat soothes his conscience!

By the misuse of another set of terms the slum administers a tonic to the worn out nerves of its moral sense.

The misuse of terms by both sets—Plutocrats and Slums—furnishes a singular instance of extremes mutually illuminating the oneness of their souls.

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