

DAILY PEOPLE



VOL. 13, NO. 73.

NEW YORK, WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 1912.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

THE JOHNSON-ROOSEVELT CONSUMER.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE speech delivered by Gov. Hiram W. Johnson of California before the Bull Moose State Convention in Syracuse "bristles with points." Take this, for instance:

"When the eight-hour bill was passed and came before the Governor every commercial body in the State of California memorialized the Governor and begged him to veto the bill. Every day he received petitions from women in the various industrial employments unanimously protesting against the bill and begging that it be not permitted to become a law. But the next day the Governor of the State would receive confidential petitions from these women stating how they were compelled to sign the petitions and begging him to let the bill become a law. Well, the bill became a law and it is in effect to-day in the State of California. There is not a single mercantile establishment or a single industry that has lost a quarter of a penny by the enactment of that law. They adjusted themselves to conditions when they had to; AND OF COURSE THEY MADE THE CONSUMER FOOT THE BILL FOR THE EXPENSE NECESSARY TO MAKE THE PARTICULAR LAW OPERATIVE. AND ALL OF OUR CONSUMERS WERE GLAD TO CONTRIBUTE THEIR LITTLE PITTANCE," etc., etc., etc.

A society so constructed that it would square with Gov. Johnson's presentation must be a circus with Consumer as the chief of the tumbling harlequins.

According to the Johnsonian structure of society Consumer is a being separate, apart of and distinct from all the other social units. His function is to consume—"only that and nothing more." According to that structure, the capitalist is no consumer: did he not "MAKE the consumer foot the bill for the expense necessary to make the particular law operative"? Or does the Johnsonian social structure contemplate something still droller, a single social unit composed of two separate and hostile beings,—one, Capitalist and who is no consumer; and one, Consumer,

who is no capitalist? and did the Capitalist body of the “two bodies in one” stand up the Consumer body against the wall and say unto him: “I shall MAKE you foot the bill”?

Of course, the structure of society is no Johnsonian harlequinade.

Every single living being in society is a “consumer.” He could not exist if he were not. Moreover, for every 1 consumer who is a capitalist, there are fully 75 consumers who are wage slaves. Accordingly, when the capitalist MADE the consumer “foot the bill for the expense necessary” to make the bill operative, what he did was to pick out of the pockets of the wage slaves 75 times as much as he himself contributed to the general pot. Even if he did no more than that, the wage slaves would be no better off,—what they saved in expenditure of tissue at work they forfeited in tissue-restoring food and clothing and shelter through “higher prices.” But the capitalist did worse than that. No pickpocket takes just what he needs. Pickpocketing goes beyond that. Prices were screwed up higher than was necessary to “make the bill operative.” Accordingly the bill was “made operative” by the virtual reduction of wages that is implied by the high prices. The “Consumer” part of the Capitalist body went scot free; the “Consumer” part of the wage-slave body stood the whole burden.

Gov. Johnson and his Bull Moose party are neither the originators, nor the sole exhibitors of the “Consumers” idiocy. The idiocy originated in Capitalist Chicanery, and it was taken up by the taken-in fraternity of the Muddle-headed Reformer, at the fountain of which Gov. Johnson, along with the Socialist party planks for the “Consumers” drank deeply.

Right is Roosevelt—it is the S.P. that stole from him, not he from it.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded December 2013

slns@slp.org