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EDITORIAL

THE “CAPITALIST PRESS.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

IT is not the purpose of this article to let loose a diatribe against the press that is operated by, for and in the interest of the bourgeois class. The purpose of this article is the more important and timely one of assisting thinking militants to resist the insidious approaches of a certain insidious cry that is latterly heard with increasing frequency.

“I would not take anything that comes from the capitalist press!” is the cry in question; and it comes, of course, from a quarter which is, or claims to be, in revolt against modern society; it comes from two different sets of throats.

One set of the throats from which the cry comes belongs to people the breath in whose nostrils is the advertisement they get from the capitalist press; in the columns of which they break a leg to appear; and clippings from which, with notices of them, often accompanied with their pictures, furnished by themselves, they treasure up as priceless treasures and proudly show around, or mail to distant friends. The Movement is everywhere acquainted with these criers against the “capitalist press.” Long before the Spokane I’m-a-bummery ripened to the point of riot its leaders were the object of praiseful biographic notices in the Spokane “capitalist press.” One of these notices, which lies upon our desk as we write, is accompanied with the picture of the biographee, the self-advertised Anarchist, Mr. Thompson, since sentenced to the rock-pile, who is described in florid language as having “posed for a picture of the typical American workingman.” Here in New York, as well as elsewhere, Socialist party men furnish numerous, almost daily illustrations of the same phenomenon. The dishonesty of the cry against the “capitalist press” on the lips of such people is too obvious to require any comment, or to need warning against.

Another set of throats from which the cry comes belongs to people of another

caliber. They seek no notoriety; they care not for capitalist press notices; they bribe no reporters with drinks and cigars to mention them. These people are honest in their posture. But theirs is the honesty of indolent minds, an honesty that ever works against itself.

The sweeping condemnation of the capitalist press, as a sink of unqualified false information, can do harm only. Much that the capitalist press furnishes to its readers is valuable. He who would bar such information from admission to his mind, only bars himself from a banquet table that no other host does, or can furnish at present. The Devil may be, is a liar. But truth does not become falsehood when uttered by the Devil. The active mind, self-respecting and virile, submits to no *Index Expurgatorius*, whether dictated to, or by himself, to him. The active mind, self-respecting and virile, is well poised; it reads everything, but weighs evidence; and it draws its own conclusions, accepting what is sensible, rejecting what is not.

Upon the indolent mind the crooked mind works. The crook, ever anxious for capitalist press notoriety, finds his account in acting as providence for the indolent mind, and barring it from a source where, among other things that the latter would discover, is the crookedness of the mind that ever yelps: "I would not take anything that comes from the capitalist press!"

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