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EDITORIAL

SLAVEOCRACY AND TRUSTOCRACY.

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THE advocacy by the leading figure in the Socialist party, Victor L. Berger, of the policy of “buying the Trusts,” together with the argument that the gentleman supports the policy with—Henry Clay’s proposition to “buy the slaves”—furnishes in hand a prime illustration of the blunders that attend upon ignorance of history, or, rather, shallowness in historic knowledge.

Chattel slavery was recognized by the Constitution, and was regulated by State laws. Whatever the horrors that accompanied the institution, there was no act, surely no conspicuous act of illegality, let alone violation of the criminal code, that the slaveholder resorted to in order to increase his slave-fold. In Virginia upon a systematic plan, in other Southern States less systematically, the slaveholder multiplied his human chattel; on all the plantations he exploited the Negro as he did his oxen. Abolitionists were hounded—ridden on rails, tarred-and-feathered, not infrequently even murdered—but this happened in the protection of the slaveholder’s “goods”: the slaveholder acted on the defensive: his, in no conspicuous instance, was a policy of aggression to swell his human chattel havings and thereby add to his civic and economic and political power. Deeply immoral as the slaveholder’s “corner principles” were, not only did his conduct have its foundation in Law, but was regulated, as a rule, by the canons of the Law. The spirit of the Slaveocracy was adherence to a system of ethics that advancing material surroundings rejected as base.

Otherwise, materially otherwise, with the Trustocracy. Like the Slaveocracy formerly, Trustocracy now is rooted in the Law;—but, differently from the Slaveocracy, Trustocracy increases its powers by violations of Law. Like the Slaveocracy formerly, Trustocracy now takes full advantage of the opportunities offered to it, and justifies its existence by the Law;—but, differently from the

Slaveocracy, Trustocracy is a criminal by the standard of its own society.

Slaveocracy and Trustocracy are animals of different order. As such they render different treatment imperative.

Society, under the Slaveocracy, may be said to have been directly responsible for the legitimate, because inevitable, evils of the institution. The thought of “buying off” the institution—however limping a thought, in that it ignored sociologic forces against which the thought was bound to dash itself,—had its ethical foundation: well may participants in an evil foot the bill for its removal. Otherwise with the Trustocracy. By no process of sane reasoning can Society be held responsible for crimes of the Trustocracy—for its fraudulent weights, its fraudulent issues of stock, its falsification of its own books, its perjuries, its bribery of Government, its confiscation of property, in short, all the acts by means of which it took “a short cut across lots” in the evolutionary field and enthroned itself the ruffian Usurper that it is. No such plea is allowed in behalf of the individuals from the Trustocracy who are caught to-day. If the individual criminal is dealt with accordingly should the band of criminals, when corralled, be treated any better?

When Henry Clay proposed to “buy the slaves” he, at least, was ethically sound; when the Socialist party now proposes to “buy the Trusts,” the material foundation being wanting to its “ethics,” it stands with its feet up in the air—the sign-manual of its whole existence.

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