

EDITORIAL

## A SPLENDIDLY UNCONVINCING ATTACK.

By DANIEL DE LEON

“ONE of the first things in the making of a Czar, is to make him believe in it all,” has said a noted student of Russian conditions. “One of the first things in the making of a docile wage worker is,” similarly, “*to make him believe in it all.*” Such is the principle on which acts Mr. John F. Stevens, one-time chief engineer at Panama, and now vice-president of the New York, New Haven and Hartford R.R.

In addressing a meeting of the students of Sheffield Scientific School, Yale University’s technical department, Stevens addressed men, many of whom, probably, would sooner or later be employed on his own road. With this additional spur to his already great anxiety to scare-crow away the gathering class-consciousness of the working class in general, he delivered an excellent speech against Socialism. We say excellent, because it was so full of holes that with but half an eye the audience before him must have been enabled to see the imps of crass ignorance and unreasoning prejudice peering out at them at almost every sentence end.

Lewis Carroll, many years ago, in the midst of a heated municipal campaign in England, wittily laid down the maxim that “A plain superficiality is one such, that if any two points be taken in it, the speaker will be found to *lie* wholly between those points.” Mr. Stevens, put to the touchstone of Lewis Carroll’s wit, has delivered himself of a plain superficiality.

“The so-called relation between capital and labor,” said Mr. Stevens. If Mr. Stevens were in the pot of a cannibal horde on one of the islands of Fiji, would he then speak of the “so-called” relation between himself and his captors? Yet that self-same position, which is occupied by 80 per cent. of the people to-day, of being chicken pot-pie for the tooth of the capitalist exploiter, he calls “so-called.”

Yet this relation, although “so-called,” is of great “importance to our business

interests, and therefore to the very life of our republic,” declared Mr. Stevens. “Our” business interests, forsooth! Business is the endeavor of one individual to make all he can out of another. It is based in the first place on the exploitation of the workers out of what they produce; and in the second, on the efforts of one set of exploiters to exchange spoils with another, at a more or less profitable figure. As capitalism develops, the number of those who can engage in it is ever smaller and smaller. Lack of capital wipes out the others. As capitalism develops, the function of controlling production, once performed by the “business man,” becomes more and more transformed into the function of holding the workers in subjection. The working class to-day actually operates and runs every industry in the country. Jules Verne’s Capt. Nemo could take the whole crew of “business interests” under the sea with him to-morrow, and no one would be the poorer. The republic would not be endangered thereby; on the contrary, like a child who had been brought up lashed to a board, it would first feel the thrill of life when the incubus was taken off.

“It is true that the great mass of humanity is born to serve—and they will to the end of time,” averred Mr. Stevens. True, the great mass of humanity, the normal, undegenerate, overwhelming majority will always serve, and be glad to. Service, not idleness, will, under a proper social system, be more and more the badge of worth and character. But service under an elected leader for the good of the community will bear none of the degrading earmarks which now distinguish service under a self-imposed master, for the good of his own private pocket. Nor does service imply that the server will always have at his elbow a non-serving parasite to despoil him of the fruits of four-fifths of his service—as he now has under capitalism.

“To keep property, even approximately, equally divided would require a redistribution about once a month,” stated Mr. Stevens. As if Socialism attempted or contemplated any such thing! As if Socialism cared how much property anybody had—so long as that property did not carry with it the power to exploit others of the fruits of their labor! As if Socialism did not aim to increase the wealth of all to a point which would seem fabulous to three-quarters of the population to-day! The turning of the thousands of drummers, of insurance and other agents, of struggling bourgeois business men into productive pursuits, the utilization of the thousands of patents now suppressed or neglected by the capitalists; above all, the incalculable impetus the development of new machinery would receive under a free system of

production, would so multiply wealth that there would be enough and to spare for all; and, everybody having enough, the minor inequalities due to personal characteristics or taste would shrink out of sight.

“And to divide labor equally would be to try to give power into human hands which only the Almighty can exercise,” continued Mr. Stevens, coming to the climax of his speech. Again, nobody wants to. If the capitalist chooses to consider honest work a disgrace, as he does to-day, and refuses to work under Socialism, nobody will take a club to him to see that he performs his allotted portion. The problem is simple and solves itself. Here is the work to be done. For so much work you are credited with having added so much to the social store, and may draw out an equal amount in return. If you don’t care to work—that’s your business. When you have indulged your anti-work hobby sufficiently to have become a bleached white skeleton, the loss, along with the pleasure thereof, will have been all yours. Socialism does not pretend to legislate an absolute equality of work for all; what it does intend to, and shall do, is to establish the eminently equitable principle that he who does ANY work SHALL eat, but that he who does NO work shall NOT eat.

And so Mr. Stevens waded through his talk, attempting to prove to his hearers that Socialism was wicked, was impracticable, and that the only thing for them to do was to “render unto Caesar the things that were Caesar’s, and unto God the things that were God’s”—in other words, to put up all the work you could, take what the boss gave you, and hold your peace.

Recently when the Railroad Y.M.C.A. Federation executive committee, composed of some fifteen HEADS OF RAILROAD DEPARTMENTS, met in Buffalo to discuss plans for spreading the organization among the men, *The People* earned some hard looks by exposing the whole R.R. Y.M.C.A. as a tool in the hands of the companies to keep the men docile and in subjection. It may thaw out the lookers of some of those looks to know that the splendidly unconvincing attack on Socialism above dissected, was delivered under the auspices of the New Haven R.R. Y.M.C.A., and subsequently published in *Railroad News*, the official monthly organ of that body.

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