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EDITORIAL

THE LACHAPELLE CASE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

WHEN the pouter-pigeon professors of capitalist economics feel their oats, and are in a particularly self-satisfied and aggressive mood, they trot out two counts at the head of their indictment of the Socialist Movement—

The first count is that Socialism would destroy incentive, whereas capitalism promotes, incites and rewards incentive;

The second count is that Socialists are unmitigated romancers—our professors would use a stronger term, but they are too polished gentlemen for that—when they say the workingman is an “abject slave” under capitalism; the fact being that “the workingman is a partner in his employer’s establishment.”

The Equity Session of the Supreme Court of Massachusetts handed down a decision on the 31st of last month that amounts to a sledge hammer blow delivered upon and shattering the skull of both the above anti-Socialist counts. It was the decision in what will henceforth be known as the Lachapelle case.

The facts are these:—Before an applicant can secure employment in the United Shoe Machinery Company he has to sign a contract binding himself to transfer to the Company all inventions he may make or obtain while the contract, which is to run for ten years, remains in force. Agreeable to this contract 95 per cent. of the inventors of shoe machinery were obliged to yield their inventions to the Company. For the sweet boon they receive \$20 wages a week. One of these employes and inventors was one Euclid Lachapelle. He made a valuable invention while being in the Company’s employ and he patented the same, and sought to profit by the fruit of his genius. The Company held otherwise. It brought suit to compel Lachapelle to transfer to it the patents he had for inventions on shoe machinery, upon the strength of the contract aforementioned. And the Court held so too.

And there lies crushed like a nutshell the myth about capitalism's promotion, incitation, and rewarding of incentive. Lachapelle must be a double-dyed ass if he willingly cudgels his mind henceforth to make any further inventions.

And there lies crushed like another nutshell the myth regarding the partnership relations between the workingman and the capitalist class. Lachapelle may not of his own incentive set his brain at work on any more inventions as a bonus to be given free, gratis and for nothing to the Company. But the Company now knows what his genius is capable of, and if he does not sweat some more inventions he will be sacked. Rather than be sacked he will invent on—just as the other inventive workingmen, whose wretched proletarian status compels them to submit to the abject slavery implied by such tyrannical contracts as the Company extorts from them.

The case of Lachapelle is not the first; it will not be the last. Unfortunately the Lachapelles are not numerous. If they were, then would there be a correcter knowledge of the hugeness of the number of inventors robbed of their invention through wage slavery—a stronger flashlight upon our pouter-pigeon professors of capitalist economics, and of the social system they are paid to prevaricate about.

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