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EDITORIAL

State Capitalism.

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The trouble that has arisen in connection with the management of the U.S. Armory located in Springfield, Mass., brings incidentally into relief a fact that Socialists have been constantly accentuating, and the accentuation of which becomes more urgent by the day:

The management of an industrial plant by the Government is not in itself Socialism. Such management is Socialism or not, according whether the Government is in the hands of the working class or not. If it is so held, then we have Socialism; and the effect will be seen in the freedom of the employees and the conspicuous absence of exploitation; if it is not so held, then the evidence will be found in its reproducing the conditions prevalent in private capitalist shops.

What do we find in the Springfield Armory? According to Col. Alfred Mordecai, the Commandant of the place and runner of the plant, “the policy of the shops (in the Armory) is to use cheap labor for the routine work,” and he goes on to explain that the reason why the Armory has been COMPELLED to do so is “the competition of the outside business world;” amplifying this Col. Mordecai proceeds:

“This competition of the outside business world enters into the Government shops to quite a degree, in spite of the impression to the contrary, BECAUSE IF IT WERE SHOWN THAT PRIVATE CONCERNS COULD DO THEIR WORK MUCH CHEAPER THAN THE GOVERNMENT, IT WOULD NOT BE LONG BEFORE CONGRESS LET OUT THE WORK AT PRIVATE CONTRACT, WHICH WOULD MEAN EVENTUALLY THE GIVING UP OF THE ARMORY ENTIRELY.”

Col. Mordecai, without knowing political economy or sociology, goes here straight to the very root of the question, to wit, the class division of capitalist society, and the consequent capitalist class-ownership of the Government. Only in case the Government is in the hands of the capitalist class, can it care for the outside competition of the “business world,” because only in that case can the beneficiaries of such capitalist class government—the capitalist politicians who supply the materials,

etc., together with the capitalist Colonels who hold the jobs of superintendence, etc.—be in danger of losing their profits and their jobs. Where the Government is in the hands of the working class such apprehensions have no more room.

Nationalization and municipalization are not in themselves Socialism. Only when the interests of the working class dominate the Government is Socialism possible; if the capitalist class is in possession, Government control and ownership is only the substitution, for the private capitalist concern, of State Capitalism.

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