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SECOND EDITORIAL

Unconscionable Macbeths

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The Lexow investigation of Trusts, that has been going on for several weeks, has had an indirect and unforeseen result. It has caused the Trust-Class to rush into print to justify itself. Many are the things they say, for many are the vulnerable points they have to cover. Of all these, the one they seem instinctively to be most anxious about is the wholesale discharge of employees by the consolidated concerns. The “justification” given by the Trust-Class on this head places them in the worst light imaginable: more unconscionable than Macbeth. Say they, speaking through the pen of one of their leading apologists:

“It may, indeed, be hard for discharged employees to find new employments, but, IN THE END, their labor, previously ill-directed, becomes available for other and useful purposes.”

The Trust is not a phenomenon that strikes only one, or a few, industries; it strikes, if not yet all, at least the majority and the most important of all. If it affected only one, or a few, the discharged employees would still have a large field in which to be absorbed; the hardship of being thrown out of work would, until the discharged are “availed of for other and useful purposes,” be temporary; and “IN THE END,” that coveted end—the increased abundance of wealth—all might yet be well: At the expense of some suffering, final happiness might yet be achieved. But the Trust springs up everywhere, the discharges are everywhere, they are continuous and endless; hence, the opportunities for the discharged to be “availed of for other and useful purposes” become infinitely small and ever smaller, the hardships of being thrown out of work become proportionately more and more severe, suffering is indefinitely prolonged, its END is not in sight. And yet, fully aware of this endless and increasing agony to increasing masses of human beings, the apostles of the Trust resist the only method that will end the evil and save the good with which the Trust is big—Socialism. They seek the accomplishment of their own private purposes; their consciences, untrammelled by the veritable assassinations they commit, they care not to jump

across the present; and with cruel ruthlessness they bother not whether each concentrative blow that they deal be the be-all and end-all. Willing are they, in the pursuit of their own private ends, to wade through gore, without compunction, though, as they know, the wading must be perpetual.

Lured by this ambition, goaded by his ruthless wife, Macbeth pauses before the room of his prospective victim. Fain would he reach a throne, resolved he is to do the deed, and yet all the profit his fevered brain hankers after is not enough to silence his conscience; the perpetuity of the wrong he is about to commit causes him to halt and meditate:

If it were done, when 'tis done, then 'twere well
It were done quickly; if the assassination
Could trammel up the consequence, and catch,
With its surcease, success; that but this blow
Might be the be-all and end-all here.
But here upon this bank and shoal of time
We'd jump the life to come.

The congenital mark of rapine with which Capitalism is born marks its every stage.

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

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