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EDITORIAL

## THE CASE OF CONGRESSMAN LITTAUER.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**D**UE in a great measure to the circumstance that Congressman Littauer<sup>1</sup> and President Roosevelt are chums, the Littauer case is making a sensation. It is fortunate that it does. It helps emphasize one of the many absurdities of capitalist society.

Mr. Littauer is a glove manufacturer, and he is a Congressman; furthermore the army and navy need gloves. Where outside of Paradise or the Elysian fields, is it imaginable that a man so situated will not seek to secure the Government as a customer?

Why does Mr. Littauer make gloves? For his health? Surely not. Is it that he has an artist's eye and love for the beauty of the human hand? Certainly not. He took to gloves as readily as he would have taken to shoe laces, or rails, or eggs, had the circumstances that surround(ed) him, at the time he "chose" his occupation, promised larger returns from shoe laces, rails, or eggs. In other words, Mr. Littauer lives in a social system whose practical morality is "do others or you will be done." It alters nothing in the case that Mr. Littauer approves of and upholds such a social system as the only one that combines the ideal with the practical on earth. The fact is that such is the social system, and furthermore that the very Government that now decides to "probe" his case, and to punish him if, despite the law, he, a Congressman, did business with the Government, upholds such a system.

What is the difference between a Littauer "dividing profit over the figure 1.55" with the Government, or a Congressman, interested in leather for manufacture, seeking to use the Government to lower the tariff; or another Congressman, who raises leather as a new product, seeking to use the Government to raise the tariff on

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<sup>1</sup> [[Lucius Nathan Littauer \(1859–1944\): Click here for a biographical sketch.](#)]

leather? Casuists may find a difference. There is none in morals.

It is an absurdity to build a government on the principle of placing wolves in charge of sheep. Such is capitalist government. Individual ownership of the means of production sets man against man. The government, born of such a state of things, cannot exercise morality. Morality in its mouth can only be hypocrisy.

Mr. Littauer did not go to Congress for the fun of it. Not one in a hundred Congressman does. There is nothing to probe in Littauer that is not to probe in ninety-nine out of every hundred officials. They are capitalists; it is their government; they use it—which of them does not?

Of course, this is a crying wrong. Of course it is against the theory that the Government is of, for and by the people. True. The theory is correct. But the facts of the capitalist system do not tally with the theory. No “probing” steads in such cases; the only thing that steads is a revolution that will bring the social facts up to the height of the theory, and make it practical.

Not “probing,” but Socialism!

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