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EDITORIAL

NEW CONDITIONS CREATE A NEW LITERATURE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE contents of the monthly magazines of this country are undergoing a noteworthy change. The editors in charge are realizing that truth is really stranger than fiction. They perceive that in the industrial evolution of the age there are incidents enacted that are more striking and dramatic, more interesting and more enthralling, than those presented in the greatest works of imaginative genius. These editors see, in the economic changes now threatening the stability of society, material for the construction of a form of literature that is neither a fictitious novel nor a dry paper, but a hybrid combining the romantic elements of the one with the scientific analysis of the other in a fluent and absorbing manner. These editors, acting on this realization and perception are now publishing contributions on the alliances existing between capitalists and labor misleaders, and the oneness of corporate interests and government—in other words, on the complete domination of modern life by the ultra-capitalist class.

Two notable contributions of this character, will be found in *McClure's Magazine* and *Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly*¹ for November. The contribution in McClure's is entitled "The Trust's New Tool—The Labor Boss." This contribution treats of the remarkable career of Sam Parks, and, after a picturesque view of his personality and positions, traces the source of his so-called dictatorship to the competitive struggle in the building trades between the "old line" contractors and the "the department store" Fuller Construction Company—a struggle, in which the

¹ [*Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly*. Founded by Frank Leslie (1821–1880), an engraver and publisher of illustrated journals, the magazine featured Leslie's streamlined engraving process, which allowed him to illustrate current events ahead of the competition. It continued operating until 1906 when it became the *American Magazine*.—From *Answers.com*]

bribery of “labor bosses” and political parties, emanating from slick, “respectable” capitalists was a large factor, and in which Parks and the Fuller Construction Company sustained mutually profitable relations, he being on the pay-roll of the company, while the company was unmolested by strikes and became the recipient of trade created by strikes brought against “old line” competitors. That in *Frank Leslie’s* is entitled “The National Lobby at Washington.” It, paradoxically, shows there is no lobby—that is, “a third house” made up of representatives of corporations who influence legislation by means of bribery—but that the lobby consists of the senators and the congressmen themselves! In other words, “the third house” is abolished!—and the senators and congressmen act and speak on the floor of the House of Representatives for corporate interests, without the intermediate influence or instructions of third parties. They directly represent capitalism. They are not public servants but capitalist servants. But the most striking exposition of the oneness of capitalist interests and government is shown in the capitalist control of the political parties of the country:

“Frequently,” say the authors, “a definite bargain is made with the national committee that something shall be done or another one not done. It is a cold matter of business. Commercial Acumen, which has built up vast fortunes in a generation or two like those of the Standard Oil crowd or of Carnegie’s coterie of young men, can usually pick a winner or make a winner in a national campaign. It did so in 1888, when it turned its back on Cleveland and contributed to the Harrison fund for M.S. Quay to spend. Again it did so in 1892, when it switched from Harrison back to Cleveland and gave the millions to William C. Whitney and Don M. Dickinson with which they swept the country. It could not choose in 1896 and in 1900 because William J. Bryan was running for president on a platform which made the corporations quake, so Commercial Acumen emptied a sum equal to a king’s ransom at the feet of Marcus A. Hanna at the behest of such men as Cornelius N. Bliss, Senator Aldrich, Senator Allison, and Senator Quay.”

And it is explained by the authors that

“the great interests which contributed in these four campaigns got what they paid for.”

In this way do the new contents of the magazines avail themselves of the new

conditions.

The fact that these editors may be inspired by interests that have failed in the struggle for mastery now going on within the circles of ultra-capitalist interests, should not detract from the merits of their publications. Neither should the fact that the socialist analysis of society pointed out the alliance between the trust and the labor fakir and the oneness of capitalist interests and government, long in advance of these contributions, be urged against them. When thieves fall out honest men hear something to their advantage. Besides these publications demonstrate anew the socialist truth that it is principally the economic conditions of society that determines the character of its institutions. If this were not so, would present day economic conditions be reflected in the contents of present day magazines?

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