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EDITORIAL

## LABOR AS “CONSUMER.”

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**T**HE educational value, or, to be strictly correct harmfulness of *Appeal to Reason* arguments is illustrated in frightful colors in that paper's issue of 6th instant.

In Euclid's geometry there is a problem that has come down through the benches of colleges by the name of the “donkeys' bridge.” The problem is not difficult in itself, it is rather plain; nevertheless, seeing it requires a certain degree of mental concentration, most pupils stumble and fall over it. Hence its name. What that Euclid “donkeys' bridge” is in geometry, the “Consumers' problem” may be said to be in economics. So easy it is to stumble and fall over that problem, otherwise so plain, that all the scheming politicians and official professors in the land are engaged in rendering the “bridge” more slippery than it naturally is. And of course in mass the people fall over it. This fact renders all the more imperative the strictest of Socialist treatment of the question. Any looseness on that head simply plays into the hands of the capitalist mental misleaders.

The working class are not concerned in the question of consumption. It is not as consumers, but as producers that the workingmen are fleeced. Only the capitalist class and its ash-barrel appendage, the middle class, who produce nothing and consume only, are interested in consumption. To these property-holding classes cheapness is vital. The less that costs them which they consume, the more wealth they have left over to turn into capital. Not so with Labor. LABOR IS SKINNED IN THE FACTORY. It is there that it is plucked. Being plucked, being left with a pittance, its consumption is reduced proportionally. Labor's CONSUMPTION is a consequence of what happens to him as PRODUCER. A pictorial presentation of the system by which the capitalist plunders the workingman must, accordingly, represent the latter in the shop and shop only—THERE having the capitalists'

hands sticking in his pockets, or their vampire tentacles sucking his life-blood.

This notwithstanding, the *Appeal to Reason* has a garish picture in which a stalwart workingman pours in wealth at one end of a zig-zagging funnel, a number of fat capitalists tapping the funnel’s elbows out of showers of dollars, and the identical workingman, labeled “Labor the consumer” distractedly and emaciatedly standing at the lowest end of the funnel, receiving THERE his WAGES as CONSUMER,—the pail into which his solitary dollar falls is labeled WAGES.

The capitalists need not feel alarmed at such cartoons, however grotesque the figures in which they are represented. So long as the working class’ eyes can be drawn to and kept fixed upon the CONSUMER’S end of the social funnel, there will be no danger to capitalist society. It is the same old story that appears and reappears periodically, now in the garb of cheaper or “plentiful money,” now in the garb of cheaper goods or “free trade,” now in the garb of cheap gas and rides as “municipalization,” now in the garb of “lower taxes,” and so forth—the fallacy of “consumption” as an issue to Labor. Let Labor have the full product of its toil IN THE SHOP, as PRODUCER, and his CONSUMPTION will take care of itself. On the contrary, turn his nose towards the consumer’s problem and his energies will be misdirected—as were and are the energies of all the workingmen who fall into the “municipalization,” “free silver,” “lower taxes,” “free trade,” etc., quagmires, to the prolongation of capitalism.

The system of capitalist robbery is centered in the shop—the question is one of PRODUCTION, not of consumption. Thereby hang all the prophets and the law,—the guard against capitalist chicanery to mislead, to boot.

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