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EDITORIAL

LANGUAGE THAT TALKS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE readers of the daily newspapers could not have failed to note how many of the latter described Harriman's interview with Ryan as told by the owner of the Equitable. The language used was certainly striking and impressive. {One headline says,}¹ "Ryan Tells of Hold Up"; another, "Ryan Says Harriman Tried to Sandbag Him"; still a third runs thusly, "Harriman Threatened Him With a Legislative Club, Says Ryan." This is the language used in describing the operations of the highwayman. But it is not unusual. Daily, the "underworld" is being drawn upon for terms wherewith to describe high finance and its transactions. "Graft" originated there. Thus it is being shown, by way of reflex, that under Capitalism social extremes meet—that the capitalist and the criminal are essentially one in aims and methods.

That Capitalism and crime are essentially one, as modern language plainly reflects, could not well be otherwise. Capitalism is the exploitation of social forces and needs for the benefit of private individuals called capitalists. Do men want to go on the land and use machinery in order to live an honorable life by their own toil—they must first pay tribute, in the form of profit, interest and rent, to the capitalists. If they refuse to pay this tribute, starvation, theft, murder, imprisonment and suicide are their lot. If, when this condition of paying tribute to capitalists in order to live is forced upon them, they rise in revolt and strike or vote against it, they are summarily beaten into submission by the strike-breaker and the militia, or are counted out by the thugs in the pay of political parties owned and controlled by the capitalist class. Should men refuse to pay tribute and, by some hook or crook (generally the latter), secure possession of land and machinery of

¹ [Curly brackets indicate damage to the microfilmed newspaper.—R.B.]

their own—they are compelled to compete with other capitalists, who combine to crush them out by means of better machinery, by monopoly, by blowing up their factories, by railroad discrimination against them, by corruption, and by a thousand and one confiscatory and criminal practices. It was only as recently as December 9 and 12 respectively that, in southwestern Kentucky and Tennessee, the factories of the American Tobacco Company were dynamited and burned down as a result of the competitive struggles between the tobacco growers and the tobacco trust. Capitalists commit depredations in order to save their own capital from ruin and confiscation by other capitalists. In this lies the secret of Harriman's threat against Ryan. Then look at the conduct of the leading industrial nations toward the weaker ones. They, in search of foreign markets in which to dispose of the surplus products stolen by the capitalists from labor, have perpetrated atrocities that make man recoil with horror. Mark Twain has lately laid bare the awful practices in the Congo. The future historian will find the present era one of international murder for profit. Capitalism is crime—it is one colossal hold up, sandbagging and threatening with clubs, not only legislative, but what is more potent, economic as well. Capitalism owns the means by which we live—it has us by the throat.

We condemn crime and criminals; why not capitalism and capitalists? We seek to abolish one, why not the other?

Away with both! On to Socialism, where social forces and needs will be operated under and satisfied by social ownership—by production for social use and not for capitalist profit! The times are rotten ripe for it! That, the language of the day makes plain! It tells volumes.

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