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EDITORIAL

## SOUNDS FROM THE BONE-YARD.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**T**HE following missive reached this office from Mongaup Valley, N.Y.:

“A Socialist Labor man gave me several of your papers to look over. The first one I read is Nov. 26, 1904, and the first article ‘A Lively Corpse,’ you tell us the wealth produced is \$140,000,000, or \$8,000 per family of five. Suppose this sum was equally distributed, that we all had and earned this amount, how long would it help us? Nine-tenths of the working people would not do a tap of work till they had spent it. I see yourselves are as anxious to mislead the public if it will only make more money for yourselves. Mark Twain can tell us more about such agitation than I can tell you. Your very paper, etc., is not worth it compared to the great dailies, and I can only see you are no better than the other agitators. Self, self.—Yours truly.”

The letter is signed F. Brezer. One more fact in the matter—Mr. Brezer, as his letter-head announces, is the Manager of the Mongaup Valley Elgin Creamery Co. And still another fact, useful to the understanding of the issue,—the article from *The People* of November 26, 1904, is a reproduction of an article that appeared in the Holyoke, Mass., *Transcript*, and in which M. Ruther—quoting the New York banker Frank A. Vanderlip’s figures on production, and the Census figures on the average earnings of the wage-earner, and heaping up Census figures upon Census figures—proves that the total amount of production for that year, at wholesale prices was \$8,500, and at retail prices \$11,000 per family, while the average amount of earnings per family averaged only \$872 a year. Ruther’s article closes with the argument that \$872 in wages can not buy back \$11,000 worth of goods at retail, or even \$8,500 worth at wholesale; and, leading with unerring precision from fact to fact, concludes that the capitalist system, plus its Democratic and Republican parties, are headed towards a smash-up.

The first thing that sticks out in Mr. Brezer’s letter is the gentleman’s grand

duck and dodge. He simply dodges and ducks the point. It is an unpalatable point to the Manager of a capitalist concern. In ducking and dodging the point which proves, like the columns of a ledger, that capitalist society is bankrupt, and that 'tis but a question of time when it will be disposed of at auction by the Sheriff of the Social Revolution, the Manager of the Mongaup Valley Elgin Creamery presents no more intelligent an aspect than he would present if, with the figures on the ledger of his own Elgin Creamery unable to balance receipts and expenditures, and revealing a huge and increasing deficit, he were to shut his eyes tight and refuse to see. Nor is there any difference between the angry Mr. Brezer, in search of solace to his uneasy mind, indulging in personal vituperation of the Socialists who tell the truth concerning the business firm of Capitalism, and the same gentleman if he were to seek the solace of a big drunk, in order to escape the disagreeable revelations that the ledger of his private firm might make to him.

But Mr. Brezer is not satisfied with dodging and ducking, and "going on a drunk." He is mad clear down to his corncobs—so mad that he becomes pot-valiant. Like an inebriate, the gentleman imagines he sees a vulnerable point in the mail of his adversary, and "goes for" it—only to fall flat upon his nose.

Against the mild equity of every family in the nation, even the families of the idle capitalists, having its \$8,500 out of the \$140,000,000 produced by Labor—against that mild equity Mr. Brezer dares say nothing. But he thinks he discovers a principle superior to equity. Equity may be good enough as an ideal; it is not always "practical," or conducive to "public policy." The "practical" business man steps forward. "How long," asks he, "would it help us" (who is "us"? the capitalists?) if each family had that \$8,500? And he proceeds to clinch his point with the triumphant assertion: "Nine-tenths of the working people would not do a tap of work till they had spent it." The only thing "clinched" is the Manager of the Mongaup Valley Elgin Creamery Company himself. The "practical" idea here uncorked is that, in order to keep the idle capitalist families in perpetual clover, even the equal share, that Labor would be entitled to, must be kept from it. The "practical" businessman's notion is that Labor must be kept hungry, else the capitalist will have no continuous swag to enjoy. The "practical" concept of the Manager of the Elgin Creamery Co. is that, seeing Labor would "not do a tap of

work” if it got its \$8,500 share, the capitalist class would, under such circumstances, have to cease “not to do a tap of work,” and itself begin shoveling snow. In other words, the “practical” notion, that is to overthrow the “equity” of the case, amounts to this—ROB THE WORKERS OF THEIR PRODUCT AND THUS LASH THEM WITH THE LASH OF HUNGER TO KEEP THE IDLE CAPITALIST AFLOAT.

What the Manager of the Elgin Creamery Co. has done is very practically to expose both the iniquity of his purpose, and the utter impracticability thereof. No sane man will believe that the Working Class, the overwhelming majority of the population, will everlastingly submit to be plundered in order that they may be saved from the “rascality” of “not doing a tap of work,” and the sponging capitalist from the calamity of having to start doing some “taps of work” themselves, or die of hunger and cold. In other words, the slave driver of the Elgin Creamery Co. has but emitted sundry sounds and noises from the bone-yard of Social Science.

P.S.—Seeing Mr. Brezer seems to have heard the name of Mark Twain, Mark Twain’s “*A Connecticut Yankee at the Court of King Arthur*” {sic} is hereby recommended to the perusal of the Manager of the Elgin Creamery. While the work may cause the drybones in the gentleman’s cranium to rattle, it may possibly also sweep some of the cobwebs from the vaults of his mind.

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