

EDITORIAL

NOTHING “UNUSUAL.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE State of North Carolina having enacted a State Rate Law, and subsequently sentenced a batch of railway officials to the chain gang for violating the law, and also heavily mulcted the road, the United States Court for the District stepped in, freed the prisoners, and annulled the fine. Commenting upon these proceedings, Judge Pritchard, who did the freeing and annulling, remarked that there was “nothing unusual” in the affair. The Judge is right. Precedent and principle combine to render usual a proceeding whereby a capitalist court, in capitalist society, rises true to its functions, and safeguards the mission by safeguarding the rights of capitalism.

The mission of capitalism is to render production so plentiful that want, or the fear of want, need not plague the human race. With this mission, as its goal, capitalism has, as a step towards its goal, the preliminary mission of compelling cooperative labor, through the concentration of the mechanism of production, without which production never could reach the requisite plentifulness for civilized life. The mission of capitalism may, accordingly, be summed up as being the preparation of the conditions for Socialism. So long as a mission is not accomplished the rights of the “mission-carriers” remain vital. The Socialist Republic is not yet reared. Capitalist society is still in force. The rights of capitalism, therefore, are not yet obsolete. It behooves the capitalist courts to safeguard these rights. Judge Pritchard did. Nothing “unusual” in that.

The State of North Carolina has been “too previous.” Like the Greenbacker, who would introduce Socialist money (vouchers for labor performed) before Socialist production is established; like the physical forcist, who would read the Movement out of the pale of civilization by resorting to the “last resort” before the peaceful method of the ballot is exhausted;—like all these, cart-before-the-horse North

Carolina would send the capitalists to the chain gang before the dome of the Socialist Republic is reared, under which alone the ways of the capitalists merit the chain-gang for the gentlemen.

All in due time. Let the workers first organize industrially, integrally so, and thereby equip themselves with the power to enforce their demands, made in civilized form, upon society. Let the workers, in short, rear the material foundation upon which to plant the superior morality of Socialism—let them do that, then, should the soul of capitalism, like an unclean spirit, seize upon any members of the body social—then it may be time enough to think of the chain-gang. Not before.

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