

EDITORIAL

“SHALLOW PHILOSOPHY” AND “MAWKISH SENTIMENTALITY.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE Boston *Inter-Nation* published and now issues in neat little pamphlet form an article by Frederic J. Whiting on “The Attack on Railroad Capitalizations.” The thanks of the “undesirable citizens” is due the *Inter-Nation* and Mr. Whiting.

The claims of Capital to its right to exist, and regarding the wrong-headedness of the “undesirable citizens” in assaulting it, has hitherto been:

1. That Capital only gets and aims at getting a fair return on the capital invested;
2. That Capital secures to all men an equal opportunity; if some turn out rich and others wage slaves the difference arises not from a denial by capitalism of equal opportunities to all, it arises from the circumstance that some are clever and they become capitalists, while others are asses, and they become wage slaves.

Mr. Whiting boldly abandons these old-time trenches. Contemptuously he discards them as “shallow philosophy” and “mawkish sentimentality.” Plump and plain he now comes out with the truth, long known to the “undesirable citizens,” and as stoutly hitherto pretended to be untruth by the “desirables.”

As to the old-time principle No. 1, regarding Capital’s fair return on capital actually invested, Mr. Whiting boldly declares: “If railroad charges are made proportionate to a ‘fair return on capital actually invested,’ the initiative of capital would be immensely impaired.” Away with the “mawkish sentimentality” of justifying high or inordinate returns on the plea of their being “fair returns on the capital actually invested!” Robust sense admits the truth. The truth, as admitted by Mr. Whiting, is that “the initiative of capital” is the getting of unfair returns on the capital actually invested. Without such a brigand’s initiative the brigand’s

effectiveness would be impaired.—Correct.

As to the old-time principle No. 2, regarding the tendency of capitalist society to secure to all men equal opportunities, Mr. Whiting tosses it aside, also, with admirable boldness. Says he: “It is a misplaced zeal that would secure for all men an equality of opportunity.” Away with the “shallow philosophy” that pictures the state as intended to afford to all its citizens an equal opportunity! Away with such shallowness! Profundity knows better and is not ashamed to say so. Time may have been when profound and unmawkish Capital was constrained to hide its candle under a bushel. That time is no more. Profound philosophy knows and tells the truth—Capitalism must aim at the reverse of securing for all men an equality of opportunity. Without that Capitalism would perish.—Correct.

And what would become of the Whitings?

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