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EDITORIAL

## PITY OF THE ENERGY!

By DANIEL DE LEON

**A** NEW publication, *The Cry for Justice*, has made its appearance in this city. It is a weekly, it is illustrated. Neither in point of quality of paper nor of typographical appearance, does it leave anything to be wished for. That much for its external qualities. As to the internal qualities, these must, in this as in all cases, be divided into two—the abstract and the concrete. In the former also the new publication leaves nothing to be wished for. The abstract quality of its contents is up to the mark of its title and program, and of its beautiful pictorial efforts: each and all denote energy, volumes of energy. That much for the abstract qualities of its contents. Its concrete qualities, however, are so woefully deficient, that the exclamation escapes involuntarily, Pity of the energy!

Take, for instance, its article on “Why Down the Trusts?” That the Trusts are doing some good this article admits, and it also correctly decries the idea of smashing them, pointing out that, by smashing the Trusts, the benefits that the Trust is instinct with to society would likewise be smashed. But the Trusts also do harm, the article justly declares. Harm in what way? The answer to that question is a test of the understanding or lack of understanding of the social causes of that produce “Greed,” “Bribery,” “Avarice,” “Coercion,” “Extortion,” “Cruelty,”—the evils that *The Cry for Justice* leaps into the arena to combat. The proper answer, denoting the correct apprehension of the subject, is an earnest that the energy expended will not be wasted; the incorrect answer tells that such energy will be lost. The answer given by *The Cry for Justice* is: “the Trusts are robbing the public; they are asking extortionate prices for everything they control”—a falser diagnosis of the disease is unimaginable, nor one more sure to cause all energies spent in its removal to be wasted.

Not cheapness is the cry of the well informed. What matters it to the working class

how cheap things are, if their wages keep step with declining prices? Ah, there's the rub. That's the "pons asinorum." (No offence meant, friend *The Cry for Justice*.) He who looks at the social question from the side of cheapness, from the side of the consumer, touches the wrong chord. He does worse, he only raises recruits for the foe; he only digs pitfalls for the "public." The "consumer's side" needs no attention. It is the "producer's side" of man that needs looking to. Have the producer's side of man safeguarded, and his consumer's side will be safe as a result. Have the workers retain what they produce, and you need not bother about the rest.

The issue is production, not consumption. This mighty truth once grasped, the rest becomes plain. The energy of those up in arms against social wrong must be directed towards securing to the workers the fruit of their labor. This goal is unattainable without the workers have secured the ownership of the land on and the tools with which they must work. The Socialist Republic alone secures the boon.

The evil in the Trust is that it enables its owners to highway-rob their employees of the bulk of their product. No "controlling" could check that. The leopard ceases not to be a leopard if his spots are painted over. The evil feature of the Trust is not a cutaneous, it is a constitutional social disease. The remedy cannot be the salve and plaster of legislative control, it must be radical treatment,—the overthrow of the capitalist system.

Pity of the energy expended in seeking to hold a runaway horse by the tail! The horse must be mastered by mastering his head.

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