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EDITORIAL

THE NEW ZEALAND “PARADISE.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

SECONDED by a foreign press that is ever greedy for tart news, from scandals to nursery tales, the New Zealand capitalist class has steadily pursued the tactics intended to promote immigration. Without a large superabundance of supply in the labor market, capitalism lingers in distress. It needs plentiful Labor, not to employ them, but to reduce the price, of labor-power, that is, wages. With a supply in excess of the demand, capitalism flourishes. Such excess not only lowers wages, but it brings about the conditions under which untutored Labor will act as a buttress for and protector of the innumerable chicaneries that are the seasoning for capitalist methods. The capitalist class of New Zealand has baited all imaginable hooks to attract the workingmen into its reach. Thus New Zealand has come to be known as the “Workingman’s Paradise.” That the “Paradise” is the usual thorny wilds of capitalism has been more than once proven in these columns from the statistical hooks published by the New Zealand authorities themselves. Now comes Sir Joseph George Edward Richard Frederick Paul Peter Ward, Premier of New Zealand, in person to America, and furnishes further proof that the Paradise is of the nature of the article known wherever the capitalist holds sway.

Sir Joseph, etc., comes with a thrilling tale. It is to the effect that the milling Trust of New Zealand [a Trust in the “Paradise of Labor”? Yes, indeed, but let’s hear Sir Joe] was trying to pay as little as possible for the wheat and charging as much as possible for the flour. “When the price of this commodity,” so runs the Premier’s story, “reached a figure where the people no longer could stand it, our Government—a Government for the people in the broadest sense of the word—,” these are the Premier’s own oily words, “stepped in.” Expectation runs high at this point. Let’s now see what that “Government for the people in the broadest sense of

the word” did when it “stepped in.” Sir Joseph proceeds: “The heads of the combine were notified that unless the prices came down a law would be enacted removing the duty on flour. The price did come down”—and of course the duty on flour, that is, a duty enacted by the “Government of the people in the broadest sense of the word” for the benefit of the capitalist mill owners, remained in force!

What happened in that “Paradise of Labor” is, according to this admission, of a piece with what happens in all other “Hells of Labor,” America included. The Government is there for the protection of the capitalist. It sets up tariffs, that raise the cost of living and thereby lower the worker’s standard of living; next, when the individual capitalist grows too giddy and would kill the hen that lays the golden egg, the Government hurries to protect him against his own folly with threats to remove its guardian wings from over his head. Not otherwise does it happen in America, where rate bills, pure food bills, etc., are enacted and even the tariff is threatened.

Sir Joe is an incautious “puller-in” for New Zealand. He should have framed and rehearsed his yarn better. The climax of a tariff on flour, to his “Government for the people in the broadest sense of the word,” is rather an anti-climax. It gives away the snap. But, then, it must be admitted, first, that the Premier’s yarn is not more defective than are the yarns of his fellow “Paradise of Labor” yarn-spinners; secondly, that it is next to impossible to spin yarns that will hold in the impossible task of imparting a veneer of “Paradise of Labor” to a common everyday capitalist hell hole.

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

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