

EDITORIAL

WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH CONGRESS?

By DANIEL DE LEON

THERE is something going on in the House of Representatives for which explanation is hard to find.

Early in the session Representative Albert Douglas introduced a bill to establish a Bureau of Mines in the Department of the Interior.

Such a bill is true to all the canons of capitalist politics and economics.

First of all such a bill provides jobs for hungry placemen;

Secondly, and above all, such a bill affords one of the best narcotics to narcotize the rank and file of the working class. Mine disasters are numerous; they happen through the stinginess of the employer to provide safety appliances, and they happen through his rush for wealth. As things generally are to-day, the reasons for these disasters are obvious—too obvious for the comfort of the front-pew-holding capitalist. State laws have been devised to conceal the obviousness. By sticking a “prominent labor leader,” some enthusiastic Gompersite, into the office of Mine Inspector the employer can rest assured that he has “a friend at court.” The unavoidable “acts of God” will thenceforth piously assume responsibility for at least the edge of the disasters. Montana, Pennsylvania, in short, all the States with such “Mine Inspectors,” are so many stages on which that kind of vaudeville show is a continuous performance. George Harrison, the mine inspector of Ohio, pithily stated the qualification of a miner nowadays to be “a Union card and a keg of powder.” With the “keg of powder” he blazes his employer’s path to affluence, with the “Union card” he screens his employer from prosecution, thanks to the “Mine Inspector.” For all that, State laws are not what Federal laws would be; moreover, if there are Federal laws, besides State laws, then the employer’s “friends at court” can be more numerous; some more Gomperstic labor leaders can be placed comfortably where they may illustrate the reciprocity of the interests of Capitalist and Wage Slave,

and “promote harmony.”

All this notwithstanding, the Douglas bill is meeting with intense opposition.

How explain the opposition? How account for the spokes that are thrust into the wheels of the Douglas bill? The conduct of Congress, as it tosses the Douglas bill on its horns, is the puzzle of the day;—and none is more puzzled than the Hon. Ralph W. Moss of Indiana, who, on the floor of the House, solemnly assured his colleagues that such a bill would “establish harmony between the men who own the mines and those who work them.”

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