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SECOND EDITORIAL

“TEN-HOUR CRIMINALS.”

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Despite the disastrousness, for the workers, of the recent trolley-men’s strike in Greater New York, the capitalist forces of the land seem decidedly incommoded by one of the slogans that the strike gave rise to:—“Ten-Hour Criminals.” From New York, as far West as Chicago, the slogan is being written on, commented on, and attempted to be perverted by the capitalist dailies, with a unanimity and insistence that are significant.

The ten-hour day is a law in New York for railway employees; it is one of the “Labor Laws” of the State; it was enacted expressly for the purpose of protecting the workingman; the law was simply brazenly violated—by whom?—by the companies, of course. “Ten-Hour Criminals” was, accordingly, a groan that went up naturally from the breasts of the stricken workingmen when, instead of the law-breaking companies being hauled over the coals, the strikers found THEMSELVES rolling in the dust under the blows of the policemen’s clubs. The charge, hurled at the companies in particular, went home and has been felt by the whole Capitalist class; hence their mouth-pieces feel constrained to meet it; and they do in such manner that it were money in their pockets if they had left it alone.

“Anglo-Saxon Legislation,” a term with which the Capitalist papers seek to intellectually brow-beat the workers, in whose hearts the slogan, “Ten-Hour Criminals,” is reverberating, can afford no consolation to those papers or the class they stand for. It is not true that “Anglo-Saxon Legislation,” as those papers claim, “throws upon each individual the full responsibility for his acts.” “Anglo-Saxon Legislation” is not the stupidity that the stupid-criminal Capitalist class’ lackeys would make it out; or yet is it the barbarity that these gentlemen would imply it to be. “Anglo-Saxon Legislation” knew Human Nature, and it is upon Human Nature that it built the elaborate super-structure of its “Public Policy” theory, together with all the supplemental legislation raised thereon. “Anglo-Saxon Legislation,”

knowing Human Nature, recognized the fact that individuals there were who, owing to their occupation or other circumstances, were exposed to imposition and needed protection, and that "Public Policy" required the shield of Society to be held over them. Accordingly, to quote just two instances, taken one each from vastly distant ranks in the social ladder, "Anglo-Saxon Legislation" held the Aegis of the Law over sailors and seamen, on the one hand, and over public officials, on the other.

The sailor and seaman, strong and robust, intelligent and quick-witted though he proverbially is, is a ready prey to the sharks ashore; his pursuit, the sea, disables him from competition with the wiles of the land-man; he is unsophisticated; in their hands he is like a child. "Anglo-Saxon Legislation" did not "throw upon him the full responsibility for his acts;" it came to their assistance and protected them by law, the neglect of which had to be borne, not by them in common with the other fellow, but by the other fellow exclusively.

Public officials, influential though they were, and in so far powerful, suffered from a special weakness; their office exposed them to expenditures that they could ill afford. "Anglo-Saxon Legislation" did not "throw upon them the full responsibility for their acts; it came to their assistance and protected them by law, the neglect of which had to be borne, not by them in common with the other fellow, but by the other fellow exclusively.

In the one case, as in the other, the throwing of the full responsibility of their acts upon the classes mentioned was considered contrary to "Public Policy," and, what is more, the principle prevails even to-day, although the public official's status has improved marvelously. Based upon a sense of the knowledge of Human Nature, of a feeling of justice and right, "Anglo-Saxon Legislation" helped the weak. "Labor Laws" are but an off-shoot of the principle.

The working class, owing to the conditions that prevail, cannot have "thrown upon it the full responsibility for their acts;" to do so were inhuman, consequently, contrary to "Public Policy." Wholly dependent upon the Capitalist class for a living, and whipped to sell themselves for a living by the scorpion-scourge of WANT, humane legislation, "Public Policy," "Anglo-Saxon Legislation," if you please, peremptorily demands that, while such conditions prevail, the workingman shall be shielded against his extorters, aye, against himself, against the weakness of his status. This is unquestionably the principle at the bottom of "Labor Legislation." It is, accordingly, stupid, and it is as criminal as it is stupid, to invoke "Anglo-Saxon

Legislation,” as the Capitalist papers are now doing, in favor of the theory that if the Ten-Hour law is violated, then, not the employer only, but the employee also is guilty; “both are criminals;” and, “if the former is punished, the latter should be punished also.”

Capitalist Society has torn loose from all the moorings of human feelings raised by the wisdom of the ages. On the ocean of the world’s history, it has become a derelict, that the sooner it is despatched to the bottom, the better.

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

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