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EDITORIAL

FOURIER LIVED IN VAIN FOR HIM.

By DANIEL DE LEON

SENATOR DEPEW delivered a speech in the Senate in favor of the Ship Subsidy bill. The speech was cast in classic mold. It combines unity of time, place and action. This circumstance enables a condensed criticism to be passed on it, to wit, Fourier lived in vain for the literary understrapper who wrote that speech.

It was Fourier who first called attention to that typical phenomenon of capitalism: crises, intense distress in sight of plenty. Distress, deep and wide, was nothing new in the world. But the distress hitherto known was the result of the actual absence, the actual non-existence of the necessaries of life. Hunger because of crop failures, exposure because of conflagrations, death because of enemies' sword,—all that seems natural. But hunger despite bursting granaries within reach of the hand, exposure despite ample shelter in existence, nakedness despite heaps of clothing mountain high,—that seems impossible: Capitalism made it possible: the realization of the fact pointed to a turning epoch of the race and rung the doom of the Capitalist regime. This is what Fourier did for mankind.

Accordingly, the capitalist and his understrappers are particularly careful in their expressions to sail around this danger point. To admit it, is to be drawn into the vortex of Socialist dialectics. They deny that there is too much wealth, they assert there is not wealth enough; with these false assertions as mattresses against Socialist cannons, the capitalists continue to contend that capitalism is necessary and Socialism a utopia, because “there is not enough to go around.”

And now comes Depew's literary understrapper and writes and Depew reads:

“We have crowded upon our rails, our lakes, our rivers, and our canals an output from every avenue of production which must find markets or PRODUCE STAGNATION AND DISTRESS BEYOND OUR DREAMS.”

Indeed? How comes it that such plethoric wealth can “produce distress”? Is it that our people are gorged with fruition, and such added and unconsumed wealth

would tempt them to gorge themselves still more like gourmands? Surely not! Our people are in distress now; they eat not as they should, nor are they clothed as the weather requires, nor do they take rest as health demands. Such is the plight of those who produce all this wealth; the only gorged ones are the class that Depew speaks for—the idle capitalist class—, and they would not feel distress even if markets are not formed for all these goods!

The admission by a capitalist that “distress beyond our dreams” attends wealth beyond our dreams is tantamount to a criminal’s confession. It is a confession that the working class are robbed; it is a confession that the capitalist class is a robber class; and finally it is a confession that the capitalist who makes the admission little knows what it is he is saying. To him Fourier lived in vain.

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