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EDITORIAL

## THE EPIDEMIC OF MURDER.

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**M**URDER seems to be rampant in New York City. Within the brief period of two weeks four horrible murders have occurred, each causing a greater shock to the community than the other. Following as these murders do upon a wholesale denunciation of the upper set, or capitalist class, they compel one to pause and inquire into their origin. There is a pleasing theory which attributes murder epidemics to psychological influences. It traces the impulse to kill to the mental suggestion, due to one or two criminal acts, which fires a train of powder, so to speak, and sets aflame morbid passions, with the results noted. This is no doubt a plausible theory. It would be an explanation did it provide a reason for the existence of those morbid passions. However, as it fails to do this, it is of no value as a solution of the problem.

Now it is a recognized fact that the system of capitalism is a system of gross materialism, brutal, cynical and murderous. Its god is mammon, and its ideal is self. It destroys the finer attributes of many and gives rise to an atmosphere in which morality counts for little and in which human life is lightly held. If a modern capitalist corporation wishes to destroy a competitor, it does not hesitate to employ the methods of the assassin and the incendiary, and calls its work a social necessity. If a capitalist nation is compelled to extend its markets, it does not hesitate to exterminate weaker nations, and proclaim the necessity a part of its manifest destiny. Finally, if the individual member of society would succeed, he must adapt himself to his environment, and, in such an environment, what can one expect?

It is noteworthy that many modern crimes are those of so-called degenerates, of men of high social, political and economic birth. This fact is dwelt upon in amazement. It is accounted strange that men so born and bred should fall so low. Yet it is never

considered that these men have the opportunity of obtaining, at first hand, an insight into modern capitalist life at its best, into its reason for existence and its accursed results. They are further brought into daily contact with its corrosive effects, and, as a consequence, they become skeptical, cynical, harsh, brutal and murderous. Convinced by their daily experiences that unselfish or social ends in the larger sense are impossible, without hope, consequently, of human or social regeneration, they give themselves up to the inevitable reaction and plunge into the excesses which startle the world.

None are exempt from the contaminating influence of a civilization which crowns with success those who gamble in the necessities of life and who starve or freeze a community, as their interests direct. Who wonders that, under such circumstances, murder seems rampant? Who wonders that mental suggestion sets ablaze a whole train of morbid passions and that murders become epidemic?

The wonder is that there are still in the community so very many men and women of good morality, men and women who are possessed of hope for themselves and their kind and who believe and work for the good time coming, when crime shall be regarded as a disease, owing its origin to biological causes over which man has no control, and whose secrets, it is hoped, scientists will some day master for the benefit and good of the race.

These men and women are the men and women to whom the Socialist Labor Party appeals. To them it points out that the good time for which they long can only come when capitalism is abolished and Socialism is substituted in its stead. When we shall have a materialism whose goal is idealistic—the triumph of man over nature and the establishment of a co-operative system of society in the interests of the commonweal.

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