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EDITORIAL

DETECTIVES TURNED LETTER WRITERS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE Mine Owners' Association of the West is now putting its corps of detectives to a new use. The use that the Association had hitherto put its agents to is described on pages 188–193 of the official report, made to the United States Senate in 1905, on the Labor disturbances in Colorado. These agents were engaged to incite the Union miners to acts of violence, and, failing in their efforts, to commit the crimes themselves, and then saddle them on the men. The cases of Beckman, Sterling, McKinney and Scott are classic. They derailed trains, dynamited and brought on other mine accidents. The innocent men, whom the agents caused to be arrested as guilty of these crimes, being acquitted while the real criminals partly confessed, partly were convicted, but all escaping with the Association's aid, this sort of activity on the part of its agents was found too dangerous by the Association. Perhaps the agents themselves became less daring or willing, possibly also more exacting in their price. The result has been the turning of their activity into other channels less exposed to exposure. The new channel is that of writing anonymous letters threatening the authorities with all manner of dreadful visitations. Of course the letters are so couched as to seem to come from workingmen. The plan is now in full working order. How well that mill is running appears from the press despatches that the Mine Owners' Association are now causing to be sent out from Boise, Idaho, and which the Republican-Democratic press is greedily reproducing under appropriate scare heads, as evidence of the guilt of Moyer, Haywood and Pettibone, in particular, the working class in general.

In these despatches Gov. Gooding of Idaho is reported to have a "two-foot stack" of "protesting letters." The letters bear the post-marks of a great variety of towns. Passages from the letters, choice passages neatly coined in the Association's own offices, and with which the Governor, as a member of the Association, was surely

familiar in advance, are “read to reporters” with unction by Governor Gooding, and they reappear prettily dished up in the columns of the capitalist press.

It must be admitted that here is change for the better. The arrest of Moyer, Haywood and Pettibone for long constituted the theme of hysterical capitalist newspaper reports. Murder and many minor crimes had formerly to be committed by the Association’s agents as “evidence” of the guilt of the imprisoned men, and for the purpose of creating a public opinion favorable to the contemplated judicial murder. Now the worst that these detectives of the Association are doing is to manufacture letters. Lord Pauncefot, once British Ambassador at Washington, and a thorough hater of newspaper reporters, is said to have addressed the Grill Club, a reporters’ club, at one of their banquets and introduced his address with these words: “I am delighted to see you all here to-night,” great applause, during which Lord Pauncefot wiped his eye-glasses, and, having readjusted them, continued: “Yes, I am delighted because so long as you are here you will be away from mischief elsewhere.”—So long as Gov. Gooding’s nasty pets are simply writing letters they will be away from their usual mischievous occupation of murdering, dynamiting and other crimes.

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

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