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EDITORIAL

## PRESIDENT ELIOT CONDEMNING CRIME AND CHUCKING CRIMINALS UNDER THE CHIN.

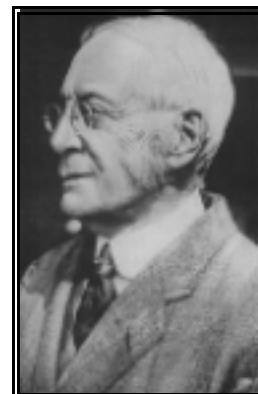
By DANIEL DE LEON

“**S**TANDING erect despite his 76 years” and with “every word that he spoke audible all over the hall” President Eliot of Harvard is reported to have addressed the Civic Forum on the 16th of this month at Carnegie Hall on the subject of “Lawlessness.”

Make such changes as the changed “tone” of modern times demands, and as the English language requires, and President Eliot’s address is to be distinguished in only one particular, an important particular, from some of the satires in which Juvenal of old portrayed the helpless decadence in which the Roman Empire was steeped.

Juvenal was not concerned with the immorality and lawlessness of the Roman plebs. The figures that stood for his models were taken from the patrician caste. So with President Eliot. He even emphasized the point that “the common thief is an outlaw and his exploits do little harm by way of example, even when they succeed. The dishonest promoter on the other hand does not necessarily become an outlaw, and when he succeeds he is apt to stimulate others to like iniquities, and the ruin he works is widespread.”

With this correct principle for key-note, President Eliot proceeded to recite a long list of categories of lawlessness—the practice of allowing the use of ingenious metaphysical defences in criminal trials; the going out of one’s own State where one would naturally incorporate his business to incorporate in another State; the practice of “foreseeing that one shall shortly wish to commit illegal acts, procuring beforehand protection against prosecution for illegitimate practices by means of



CHARLES W. ELIOT  
(1834–1926)

legislation, apparently innocent, but really designed to entrench in their control of trust institutions speculative and immoral officials, or to prevent convictions for criminal violence, not yet perpetrated but to be perpetrated; the practice of directors “selling the control of a corporation without giving the minority holders a chance to protest”; Courts “packed by Executive appointments in order to secure from these same Courts decisions in conformity with the wishes of the Executives”; etc., etc.

What individual capitalist is there who fails to fall under one or other of these categories ?

Juvenal of old, or old Juvenal was frank to charge that things were going from bad to worse; the Juvenal who spoke before the Civic Forum was less candid, less truthful. Having lambasted the practices of his hosts, he thereupon proceeded to chuck them under the chin with the mendacious assurance that society was improving, “not steadily, but by spasmodic advances.”

Whereupon all hands adjourned to a late supper, happy—ready to make some more “spasmodic advances.”

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

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