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EDITORIAL

COLUMBIA'S CANNED ECONOMICS.

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AT the Savoy Theater, on January 3rd, there being a sort of symposium held on Socialism, Prof. J.B. Clark of Columbia University gave his reasons against the Movement. The report made to this office of the Professor's argument being considered hardly possible, even from a Columbia Professor, he was communicated with. Before us lies, in the Professor's own handwriting, and in quotation marks, the gist of what he said. It is:

"In certain industries in New England, with which I happen to be familiar, the average capital per worker is about \$1,000. The rate of interest can not be computed at over 5 per cent. or 6 per cent., and, as some of the capital is borrowed, it pays only that amount. Let us say that the total returns in all the capital used in these industries were 10 per cent.; then, absorbing the returns of capital, as an addition to wages would give back to each worker \$100 per annum. Including certain great industries and also commercial dealings in the estimate would increase the amount. But even within this larger range, absorbing the returns of capital would not probably give the workers over a third of what they now get, as a clear addition to their income; and that would be swept away if there were as great a falling off in production as there would be reason to expect under collectivist rule."

Prof. Clark proceeds from assumptions—assumption, it will be noted, that his superb indefiniteness affords no opportunity to verify. Assuming, as the Professor does, and using his own language—

"Let us say" that the figures he gives apply to all the staple industries of the land, an assumption with which he can find no fault, seeing that it makes in favor of his argument, in that it corrects whatever defect may lie in the selection of the "certain industries with which he happens to be familiar." Let us say that the state of things, with all the staples of the land, is as Prof. Clark states with regard to

those “with which he happens to be familiar.” Has the professor proved his case against Socialism? What the Professor has done is to hoist himself with his own petard.

With facts innumerable and to satiety Socialist science has proved that capitalism blights the productive powers of the land. The mechanical powers of production, to-day available, so far from being put to the fulfillment of their mission—the production of abundance—are kept in check. Capitalist production being for sale and not for use, production is permanently kept at low water mark in the interest of prices. Mechanisms of production untold lie fallow to-day, and many more could be called into existence. But the number is not increased, and the available ones are not put to full work just because that would send prices down. It is, in this respect, just what happens periodically when the New Jersey peach crop is “too abundant”—the “super-abundance” is dumped into the Raritan Bay, in order “to steady prices.” Take the Marconi wireless, as one of thousands of illustrations. It is not used inland; inland we remain tied down to the old and infinitely less productive wire system—thanks to capitalist interests.

“Let us say” that Prof. Clark’s figures are correct and of general application, and that so small is the capital in use that it can not yield enough for all—“let us say” that’s so, and what Professor Clark has done is to prove a leading count in the indictment that Socialism has drawn up against Capitalism.

Next time Prof. Clark tries to shiver a lance against Socialism he should be careful not to deal in the canned economics that Columbia University places upon the market. Canned stuff frequently decays, gathers gases, and these explode in the face of the dealer who incautiously tries to retail them.

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

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