

EDITORIAL

## THE FABLE OF THE MICE, ETC., OVER AGAIN.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**H**ONESTLY groping its way through the mists of its bourgeois confusion of thought, the New Haven *Union* of the 15th of this month dissents from the Yale Prof. Bailey's recent dictum that "the very best move to lessen immorality would be to give higher pay to working girls."

"As far as he goes," says the *Union* cautiously, "Prof. Bailey is right; but he must not forget that poverty is not the only cause of immorality; too much wealth is quite as prolific a cause of this evil as too much poverty." And the *Union* proceeds to point out the real remedy. And what was that? The overthrow of the prostitution-breeding capitalist system? No, but "economically and justly" to bring both ends of the social ladder closely together by lessening the wealth at one end and increasing it at the other. In other words, leave the ladder in existence but tinker with its two ends.

A lot of mice, in convention assembled on a certain memorable occasion in the annals of Mousedom, having lengthily considered the ravages wrought among them, and the pit-a-pat state of fright their little hearts were kept in by a certain wicked cat, debated what was to be done. Although unfamiliar with the rules of the Greek stage concerning crowds, the assembly of mice divided into two sets—radicals and moderates.

The radicals were of the opinion that the foe should be killed, and they proposed a variety of ways to despatch him. The moderates, appealing to "evolution" against "revolution," objected to the drastic methods of the extremists. "All that we desire—safety of life and limb, besides absence of chronic palpitation of the heart,—is unattainable. Let us," they urged, "be satisfied with half a loaf rather than none. Let us make our lives and limbs safe, and be satisfied with that. The thing can be done economically and justly by lessening the mousicidal power of the cat, at one

end of the ladder, and increasing our own safety, at the other end, without destroying the ladder itself. All we have to do to that end is to fasten a little bell to the cat's neck. The bell will announce his approach, and we shall have time to get out of the way."

The moderates being in the majority the proposition carried, and great was the majority's joy until a member of the minority asked: "Who will bell the cat?"

The tinkering with the capitalist social ladder so as to avoid the ladder's inevitable consequences partakes of the idea of belling the cat. Who will do it?

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.  
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[slpns@slp.org](mailto:slpns@slp.org)