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EDITORIAL

## A CRIMINAL RECORD.

By DANIEL DE LEON

“IF persons possessing confiscated property—no matter how acquired, perhaps treacherously—were compelled after a hundred and fifty years to make restitution, we should find few families owning legitimate property in France.”

So wrote in the early part of last century, a Frenchman who stands second to none for his penetrating insight into the mercenary and criminal character of the bourgeoisie of his day.

What a pity that same man could not be here to-day, one hundred and thirty years after the declaration of American independence, to give to the world his estimate of the legality of the property now in the hands of the modern bourgeoisies, the American capitalist class.

The theft of inventions and discoveries is an old tale and a sad one. From Eli Whitney, whose cotton gin models were stolen by the Southern cotton growers, down to John Brislin, who last winter died penniless after the theft fifteen years ago of his patented invention of the steel rolling mill, which built up the Carnegie fortune, inventors without number have been the victims of capitalist “confiscation.” Nowadays, every up-to-date plant has its corps of inventors, who, “in consideration of employment,” are bound to surrender all interest in the fruit of their brains.

Not alone against his employes does the capitalist employ the brigand methods of the dark ages. The same instincts which, fostered by the present competitive strife for existence, lead him to rob right and left those whom he looks down upon as his “inferiors,” inevitably bring him in the end to indulging the same tactics against those whom he fearfully recognizes as his “equals” or “superiors.” They, too, must be struck down relentlessly, if his business is to prosper. The cut-throat conduct pursued by the Standard Oil, by the Harriman roads, by the Tobacco Trust against

their competitors and rivals are the subject of Congressional reports. In Alaska, the employes of the Guggenheim and the Bruner railroad interests were driven, early in the present month, into deadly conflict with each other, for their masters' benefit. From Kentucky comes the news of the dynamiting of a thresher and the killing of a farmer, by other farmers or their tools, for business reasons. Some years ago the same district was the scene of an equally violent and greatly protracted warfare between the tobacco growers. Probed wherever it may, the record of the capitalist class is seen to be an essentially criminal record, and the property of that class is seen to be based and cornerstoned upon that record. It is the historic mission of the working class to cut short this criminal record by checking the career of the criminal capitalist class, and establishing the Co-operative Commonwealth.

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