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EDITORIAL

Natural Again.

By DANIEL DE LEON

In the regular course of events, two bills landed abreast of each other before the Senate of the United States on the 6th instant. One of them was a bill, or resolution, to annex Hawaii; the other was a bill limiting the hours of daily services of laborers, workmen, and mechanics employed upon the public works or work done for the United States, or any Territory, or the District of Columbia. In short, one bill was in the interest of a section of the capitalist class; the other was in the interest of the working class, which is the same as saying that it was against the interest of all sections of the capitalist class. Understanding this, the fate of the two bills will be no mystery to the knowing.

Naturally, in a Senate composed from top to bottom of capitalists and their pursuivants, the bill for the eight-hour day was promptly dumped, and precedence was granted to the Hawaiian proposition which puts dollars and cents into the pockets of the parasite class of capitalists.

So far, what happened with this eight-hour bill was natural enough. Legislation favorable to labor is a fruit that can be strained through the loins of a capitalist Congress as little as a Kentucky stallion can be strained through the loins of a Texas coyote. But there were other accompaniments to the fate of this eight-hour bill that render the occurrence still more natural—natural all around.

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The scientific deduction that capitalist government is there for the benefit of the capitalist class; that it is a government of, for and by the exploiter flows from shiploads of facts. Occasionally, however, one thing or other happens that seems to overthrow the theory. A bill does pass somewhere, and is unquestionably in favor of labor. Does the fact overthrow the theory? No, because it must be considered in connection with other and accompanying facts.

To become law a bill or proposition must first combine at least three features:

It must be passed by one House;

It must be passed by the other House;

Lastly, it must be approved by the Executive.

The passing of a bill by the lower House, for instance, in no way indicates that the capitalist class, controlling that House, is in favor of the workingman; it may pass the bill for show, knowing that it will be defeated in the other House; and both Houses may pass it, knowing the Executive will veto it; or even the Executive may join in making the bill a law, knowing that the courts will declare it unconstitutional. All this has been seen a score of times in all sorts of combinations; and one of these combinations accompanies the fate of the present eight-hour bill:

IT PASSED THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES UNANIMOUSLY; BUT WAS THROWN ASIDE IN THE SENATE!

If ever nature was vindicated, it was vindicated in this bill. The capitalist class is class conscious; it knows the uses of government; and it does not muff its opportunity. The captor of governmental power, it uses the government in its own exclusive interest.

* * *

But yet the features of the fate of this eight-hour bill are not yet exhausted:

Only the other day the president of the Granite Cutters, in a frantic effort to prevent his union from yielding to the increased light it is getting, and cutting loose from the A.F. of L., alluded to the Eight-Hour bill; he claimed that it was backed by that “powerful” labor force in the A.F. of L.; he prophesied its passage as a result of such backing; and he argued—this was his main point—that the dues paid by his union to the A.F. of L., and a good deal more, was certainly a good investment seeing that the A.F. of L. would “wrench from Congress the eight-hour day for the workingman.” What has become of the investment?

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Take it all in all; turn the events over which way one wants; look at it from what side one may choose, it is a complete manifestation of the natural laws that govern the acts of man, producing natural results.

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

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