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EDITORIAL

GIVING THE CASE AWAY.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE *Evening Post* of Saturday, April 2nd, publishes, under the heading:
“Savings of the Rich.—Who Use the Savings Banks and Who Have a Right to Use Them—A System Which May Be Misused,”

a letter in which the following appears:

“To the Editor of the *Evening Post*:

“Sir: On the principle that what is worth the having is worth the seeking, many, in fact, most of the banking institutions of the metropolis have each its trained adept in the persuasive art, whose duty it is to represent that the 2½ per cent. which his institution is willing to pay is a better quality of 2½ per cent. than is offered by any other institution. When it is further assured that only paper money of virgin newness is passed through the teller’s window, the argument is complete, and the gentleman who controls the \$100 or \$100,000 is convinced forthwith and opens an account.

“The man that looks with disdain upon a 2½ per cent. drawing account, or a 3 per cent. certificate or deposit, is your dealer in things sumptuary. Your butcher, grocer, baker, tailor or haberdasher will tell you, ‘when I have too much money in my business bank, I put the excess in the savings bank.’ Is not this on the par of a wealthy patient seeking treatment at a free dispensary? Those in charge of benefactions guard more against the unworthy rich than against the unworthy poor. Is it not eating of the ‘children’s bread,’ this putting of profits of a prosperous retail business into a savings institution ordained primarily to promote habits of thrift and frugality among wage earners? The result would be astounding if, in New York State alone, it could be ascertained what the percentage of business funds in the savings banks bears to the whole. The writer feels safe in averring that here in New York city it is in excess of 40 per cent.

“The savings banks in this city, founded for the savings of the artisan, clerk, domestic and sailor, now stand as the open depository of the funds of the well-to-do. It is anomalous that the funds of the affluent should mingle with those of the self-denying and of those of meagre income, and that a certain sanctity should attach to the whole. Public sentiment has prompted

legislation of a benign and most extraordinary kind in favor of the savings bank depositor, but in the savings bank to-day there is no gulf fixed between Lazarus and Dives.

“D.

“New York, March 29.”

On all occasions, in season and out, savings bank deposits have been attributed solely to the wage workers, and as such have been made to do duty in support of existing conditions. If a working man arose to advocate the cause of his class, “the enormous increase in savings banks deposits by the wage earners” was straightway hurled at him. When depression threatened, “the affluence of the workmen, as reflected in savings bank deposits” was conjured up to stave it off. Wage reductions were justified on the ground that “the increase in savings bank deposits show the wage earners to have reaped enough during the fat years of prosperity to tide over the lean years of adversity;” while this same “increase” was used to resist demands for more pay and less hours. And now it is made plain that those self-same “increased savings bank deposits by wage earners” are mainly the deposits of business men and capitalists. The correspondent of the *Evening Post*, who is, evidently, a banker losing a lucrative trade through the practice, shows that business funds bear a very large percentage of the deposits in savings banks; while further on he says:

“The savings banks in this city, founded for the savings of the artisan, clerk, domestic and sailor, now stand as THE OPEN DEPOSITORY OF THE FUNDS OF THE WELL-TO-DO.”

It would be interesting to know how much IN EXCESS of 40 per cent. business funds in savings banks are. The *Post’s* correspondent’s cautious figure and the emphatic manner of his protest indicate that the excess is great, so great as to warrant action. Be that as it may, “D.,” in showing that savings banks “stand as the open depository of the funds of the well-to-do,” has given the case of capitalism in the matter of “the increased savings of the wage earners” away. He has shown that it is based on falsehood and should be thrown out of court.

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

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