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EDITORIAL

## CORN AND CIRCUSES.

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**N**OT since the day Gladstone introduced his bill for Home Rule in Ireland has the conservative press of Great Britain been so wrought up as it is today over the budget, announced in the House of Commons on last April 29 by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lloyd-George. The proposed budget has not, at least not yet, been hooted for treason, as happened to the Irish bill; it is, however, being denounced as “the extremist Socialist budget that was ever laid before any Legislature.”

That the conservative press which holds such language is sincere in its belief is altogether likely. It is altogether likely that a budget, which either enacts a new tax, or increases the existing tax on estates, on earned incomes, on unearned incomes, on legacies, on inheritances, on automobiles to a degree that is charged “to approach confiscation” in that “the State seizes one-quarter” of what belongs to the property holders, and which, besides foreshadowing an extension in the old age pension scheme, makes provision for insurance against unemployment—it is altogether likely that such a budget should appear to the conservative press as a “Socialist scheme to bleed the upper and middle classes in order to provide largesse for the proletariat.” Nothing else can be expected from the elaborately cultivated ignorance on the capitalist mind in general concerning social questions, Socialism in particular.

Suppose the new budget cut, indeed, as deep into the pockets of the capitalist class as is claimed; suppose also that the proceeds in full were to be devoted to old age pensions and insurance against unemployment, as one would imagine from the outcry; suppose all that. What then? Why, then, the budget would be but an aggravated evidence of what the actually proposed budget actually is—an evidence, not of wild-eyed Socialism, or anything approaching it, but of capitalism in sore

distress, wild-eyedly throwing tubs to the whale—a thing never done in the interest of the whale, but in the interest of the tub-throwers.

Socialism gives no largesse. Largesse is a shadow, cast before or beside it, by exploitation. Only robber classes, operating under robber class institutions, scatter pennies to the mob. Socialism has no mob to be largessed. Socialism, in control of the political machinery, would, indeed, as a matter of public policy, to say nothing of retributory justice, “tax” the stolen property away from the thieves who now hold it. But the proceeds of such a Socialist “budget” would not go to largesse. It would be used to organize the nation into possession of the plants of production, on such principles and in such form as to the workers shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.

The budget announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer Lloyd-George is, indeed, startling. It is startling, not as a Socialist measure; it is startling as a capitalist measure that marks an epoch—an epoch best understood by recalling the epoch when the ruling class of Old Rome felt constrained to scatter corn to, and shower circus shows upon the then proletarians—in order to save its own neck, or rather, put off the day of its doom.

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

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