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EDITORIAL

PAYING THE PRICE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

INFANT mortality has reached such a pitch in England that Government has found it necessary to turn its thoughts upon the plague. Accordingly Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, the Premier, recently held the following language to a deputation:

“While the standard of health of the general community goes on improving, the children’s death-rate gets worse and worse. Children must be well-born and well-bred or nurtured. In order to further the former, favorable conditions must be established for the performance of the functions of motherhood. Mothers are worked when they ought not to be worked; they are taken back to work before they ought to be taken back to work; and they have neither the means, nor the power, nor the vital energy to perform their part in this matter.”

So far so good, and rather an astonishing confession on the part of the head of a capitalist Government.

After Sir Henry, spoke Mr. John—John Burns, the “Labor” member of the cabinet. He said:

“Infant mortality often springs from other causes than those which the factory inspector can prevent. One of the chief contributing factors towards the high mortality rates in districts where housing is relatively good, and where wages are fairly high, is the tendency on the part of the people to spend on beer what they should lay out on food for their children.”

“Labor” member of the cabinet Burns’s words remove what was surprising in the capitalist Premier’s utterances. The latter’s utterances were in the nature of those numerous “Labor” bills passed by Senate or Assembly here in America with the knowledge that they will be afterwards pigeonholed or scuttled in Assembly or Senate. The charge made against the capitalists by the “Senate” Campbell-

Bannerman, was made with the knowledge that it was to be scuttled by the “Assembly” Burns. It was a comedy, nor can tactfulness and skill in the artistic distribution of the parts be denied to whomsoever planned the farce. The Working Class “got it in the neck” in gentle, yet none the less effective style. The role of justice to Labor and indignation towards capitalists was assigned to a capitalist, the role of justice to capitalists, and indignation towards wicked Labor was assigned to a “Laborite.” Had Sir Henry held the language of Mr. John, the workingmen might say he was prejudiced; but the slander upon the Working Class, dropping from the lips of Mr. John, is expected both to disarm their objection and to encourage the Capitalist Class to pursue undeterred their career of promoting drunkenness through low wages and unsanitary shop conditions, of unsexing women, of blighting motherhood, of blasting the child, and then shielding themselves behind the insult of drunkenness added to the injury of robbery.

John Burns was but paying the price of his “elevation to the cabinet”—the price ever contracted for and agreed upon between the party of the first part and the party of the second part, when a workingman receives a capitalist political job—the betrayal of his class.

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

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