

Capitalist Class Rule: Executive, Legislative, Judicial (October 8, 1910)

The capitalist class is in power; the working class is in slavery. This is the situation in all lands, including the United States.

President Taft is a capitalist executive; Congress is a capitalist legislative body, and the Supreme Court a capitalist judicial instrument. These several governmental powers originate in the capitalist constitution of the United States. There was not a working man in the convention which framed the constitution; there has never been a working man in the presidential chair; there is no working man in the Supreme Court, and there is not a representative of the working class in the Congress of the United States.

In the present system the capitalists are the rulers, rich and defiant; the workers are the subjects, poor and submissive. The Republican and Democratic parties stand for the rulers; the Socialist Party for the subjects. Choose ye between them!

But this is only preliminary to the specific matter to be discussed in this article, the purpose of which is to show how organized labor is throttled by the powers of capitalist government.

The state of New York enacted a law through a recent legislature providing for reasonable hours and sanitary conditions in the bake shops of that state.ⁱ The capitalist bakers promptly appealed to the courts; the state courts at first, consisting of judges elected by the people. The trial judge held the law constitutional. The capitalist masters then appealed to the appellate division and that court affirmed the decision of the trial judge. The case was next carried to the state court of appeals and again the law was declared constitutional.

The final move was to appeal the case to the Supreme Court of the United States, consisting not of judges elected by the people, but of corporate attorneys appointed by a capitalist president and holding office for life. Of course the capitalist Supreme Court decided the case in the interest of the capitalists owning the bake shops and against the slaves who toil in them. The law was declared to be unconstitutional and by a stroke of the pen wiped from the statute books.

The people of New York demanded the law; the Supreme Court at Washington denied it. If this is not despotism, pure and simple, what is it? Has the tsar of Russian more absolute power than this?

The organized workers of New York to a man pleaded for this law; the people of the state recognizing it to be in the interest of public health favored it, but the capitalist proprietors of the bread factories, whose profit would have been reduced, were opposed to it, and their court annulled it. If this is not a clear case of capitalist class rule and a perfect demonstration of capitalist class government what, then, may it be called?

The infamy, the heartlessness, the utter moral depravity of this decision, entirely apart from its class nature, defies characterization. Profit is safely guarded; health and life wantonly destroyed.

Now for another case.

In 1890 Congress enacted what is known as the Sherman Anti-Trust law. Its object was, as stated by its author and supporters at the time, to prevent capitalist monopolies in restraint of trade. It was explicitly understood that it was not to prevent workingmen and farmers from combining to advance their interests.

This law was on the statute books totally inoperative, a dead letter, for four years. In 1894 the Pullman strike occurred. Like a flash the Sherman Anti-Trust law appeared. Its real purpose was not to interfere with capitalists — that was a mere blind — but to throttle organized labor and crush any rebellion of the slaves. Under this law the strike was broken up, the leaders jailed, and the railroad corporations came out with flying colors.

Another case of capitalist class rule and capitalist class government; another demonstration of capitalist class supremacy and working class slavery. Republican and Democratic votes are for this very sort of thing. The capitalist bake shop owners of New York all vote the Republican and Democratic tickets, and so do the capitalist owners of the railroad corporations. In the name of common sense, why should the wage slaves vote with these capitalists to drive the nails into their own coffins instead of giving their votes to the Socialist Party which proposes that the workers themselves shall rule the land and control its institutions?

Now for the climax.

The last Congress voted \$485,000 to the secret service as an incentive to “detect crime,” and \$200,000 more “to detect and prosecute infringements of the Sherman Anti-Trust law. When this measure was pending, an amendment was offered providing that no part of this \$200,000

appropriation should be used for the prosecution of organized labor. Here the line was clearly drawn and the issue sharply defined between capitalist corporations and labor unions. President Taft at once leaped into the breach, condemned this amendment as “class legislation,” and used all his power as executive to defeat the amendment — and succeeded. As a result organized labor, whenever and wherever it develops sufficient power to menace capitalist class rule will promptly be crushed by a capitalist court, backed by a capitalist army, under the direction of a capitalist executive, for all of which a capitalist Congress has made an annual appropriation of \$200,000, every dollar of which is wrung from the very wage slaves who are to be crushed by it.

One can easily fancy the capitalists and their Republican and Democratic puppets softly crooning: What jackasses these workers be!

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¹ In 1900, following two years of lobbying by the Journeymen Bakers’ and Confectioners’ Union, a law was passed by the New York assembly restricting the hours of labor of bakery workers to ten per day and 60 per week. This regulation was challenged by the New York State Association of Master Bakers which litigated the matter for several years, the New York court of appeals finally ruling the law constitutional early in 1904. Upon final appeal the law was overturned by a narrow 5-4 decision of the US supreme court on April 17, 1905, with Justice Rufus R. Peckham delivering the opinion of the majority. Citing the 14th Amendment, Peckham declared “there is no reasonable ground for interfering with the liberty of persons or the right of free contract by determining the hours of labor in the occupation of a baker.”