

EDITORIAL

“INVEST IN SPANISH AMERICA.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

PROBABLY upon the principle that birds of a feather flock together, the International Trading and Developing Co. has a big, splurging half-page advertisement in *Below the Rio Grande*. The advertisement is headed: “Invest in Spanish America—No Competition—Plenty of Labor—Low Wages—Cheap Cost of Living.”

The four assertions—“No Competition,” “Plenty of Labor,” “Low Wages,” “Cheap Cost of Living”—are half-truths, hence, misleading. In successive articles we shall take up the four.

I.

“Competition,” in its strict technical sense, means the struggle of capitalists, or capitalist concerns, with and against one another, to secure purchasers; a struggle which implies underselling, which, in turn, implies the cutting down of profits. It follows that for there to be “competition” there must be more than one capitalist in the field, in any one line. The moment there are several, “competition” springs up. To assert of any place that there is no “competition” there, is to assert that only one capitalist concern is exploiting any one field.

Even granting this state of things to exist in Spanish America, practically existing conditions in that region would cancel the absence of “competition,” with the final result that profits are small, and, what is worse, are so precarious that they partake of the nature of gamblers’ gains.

The broad territory of Spanish America—with the single exception of the limited area occupied by Chili—presents the sight of a degenerate Feudalism, or bastard Capitalism, the former not having been wholly worked out of the system; the

latter being yet in the forming. The net result, so far as civic order is concerned, is that the Governments consist of political keepers of roulette tables, if looked at from one angle of vision; or, if looked at from another angle of vision, they consist of robber baronies. The final net result, so far as profits are concerned, is the same as if “competition” were of the intensest. The plunder that capital must submit to, in order at all to hold its own, or the bribes that it must bestow in order at all to be tolerated, play havoc with profits.

Trading and Developing Companies may, or may not be posted upon these facts. The College training that their leading geniuses may have received, may render them easy dupes; or they may have shed their College training, and, having made their “experiences,” at the cost of their own bank accounts, transfer their field of operation to this country, where, setting up an office for the “developing” of Spanish America, they turn their activities towards inverting the process—improving their own bank accounts and thereby allowing others to make their “experience.”

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