

EDITORIAL

“DIAMOND” OR “SWINE”?

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE name of Tarbell shines bright in the firmament of Fight-the-Standard-Oil-Octopus. Ida Tarbell has written scathing articles, which, Lawson-like, thrilled all “octopus” killers. Walter Tarbell, the lady’s brother, led in setting up anti-octopus refineries, and enjoyed a reputation as a “dragon fighter.” Suddenly, from unexpected quarters, the Tarbell light is dimmed.

A government investigation of the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey is now being held in the Federal Building before Special Commissioner Ferris, appointed by the United States Circuit Court of Missouri. In the course of the proceedings, held on the 16th instant, Walter Tarbell, the Treasurer of the Pure Oil Company of Philadelphia was called to the stand where he was submitted to the following questions, and the following answers are extracted from him.

“What was the sphere of operation of the Producers’ Protective Association of which you were a member?”

“It was a secret association of oil producers having local assemblies.”

“Its object was to limit the production of crude oil?”

“One of the objects.”

“And to raise the price of crude oil?”

“Yes.”

“And it resulted in what is called a shut down?”

“It resulted in the raising of the price.”

“Did it from time to time control the production of crude oil?”

“It did.”

Mr. Tarbell said that his company was organized with \$1,000,000 capital. After it obtained control of other companies the capital was raised to \$10,000,000.

“And notwithstanding that for years the Pure Oil Company has been in competition with the Standard, its business is increasing and expanding?”

“Yes.”

Here we have it all in a nut-shell. “Octopus-fighters” do not fight octopus(es) because an octopus is bad, but because they are no part of the octopus themselves. When the “octopus-fighter” takes the field against high prices, he does not do so because he is in principle opposed to high prices, but because the cry of “high prices!” brings all the fools over to his side, captivates their hearts, leads their mind prisoner, and enables the anti-high-prices man to use them for cat’s paws. Accordingly, the octopus-fighter aims at prices as high as an “octopus,” commits all the “atrocities” of an “octopus,” and differs from the “octopus” only in that he pretends to be none, and succeeds in humbugging the gullible.

Some may call this sort of “octopus-fighting” “diamond cutting diamond,” others may prefer to call it “swine rending swine.”

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

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slpns@slp.org