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EDITORIAL

WHY SO MANY WORDS?

By DANIEL DE LEON

IN the city of Baltimore a City Wide Congress has been held to inquire into the high cost of living, and ascertain the reasons therefor.

A committee, previously appointed, reported to the Congress by submitting to it a long list of "reasons."

From the almost interminable list we pick out the following 17 items:

- "Increased supply of gold.
- "Price control of exchanges and agreements.
- "Tariff on foodstuffs and other products.
- "Abuse of cold storage to help corner markets.
- "Decreased amount of labor on farms and consequent increase in wages.
- "Decrease of truck farms and farming around the city.
- "Excessive profits by middlemen, due to too many small shops and too much handling between producer and consumer.
- "Too much purchase on credit at advanced prices.
- "Inadequate transportation to proximate farming districts, especially in winter.
- "Bad roads and inadequate repair of same.
- "Short weights and inadequate control of scales and measures.
- "Abuse of patent laws.
- "Architects making no provision in modern houses for storage of goods.
- "Telephones, resulting in ordering on credit without bargaining for price.
- "Inadequacy of facilities.
- "Too high charges and improper conditions of our city markets.
- "Growing luxuriousness of the people, which eliminates careful, businesslike housekeeping and shopping."

The story is told of the officers of a municipality in Germany, some time in the Middle Ages, who marched out of the town to meet the King, who was to visit the town, and give him the reasons why he was not received with loud salvos of artil-

lery. The spokesman of the municipal authorities unrolled a long roll of parchment; addressing His Majesty, he said the roll contained 150 reasons for the absence of salvos of artillery, and proceeded to read them off. When he reached the 97th reason he read: “Reason 97—Our municipality has no artillery.” The King, at that point interrupted the reading, saying: “You need not read off the remaining 53 reasons. You should have made the 97th reason the first and only one. It is ample.”

The committee that reported to the City Wide Congress in Baltimore had even less sense than the authorities of the German municipality in the story. They, at least, inserted somewhere on the list of reasons the all-sufficient reason for their seeming slight to their sovereign—the non-ownership of artillery. The committee that reported to the Baltimore Congress inserted nowhere on their list of the reasons for the high cost of living the all-sufficient reason, compared with which all their other reasons are minor, and from which all the other reasons flow—the domination of Capitalism.

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