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EDITORIAL

## SKELTON'S NEY AND SHERIDAN.

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**T**HE story has come down from the 18th Century days of the British stage that a riotous customer having started a disturbance in the gallery, and having been seized by those near by, and being about to be thrown over the railing, a voice went up from the pit: "Don't waste him! Don't waste him! Drop him on a fiddler!" It would be a pity to allow "*Socialism, A Critical Analysis*, by O.D. Skelton, Ph.D., Sir John A. Macdonald Professor of Political Science, Queen's University, Kingston, Canada," published by Houghton Mifflin Company, to go to waste. We propose to drop the "Critical Analysis" upon the rock of facts and thus utilize as a demonstrator what was meant to be a ripping up of Marxism.

To this end Prof. Skelton's "Critical Analysis" offers exceptional opportunities. We shall avail ourselves of the opportunity in a series of articles, the present being the first.

Prof. Skelton, p. 128, is astounded at the "gaps in the Marxian theory" concerning "the function of the entrepreneur in modern industry"; on the same page, he asserts: "Marx persistently refuses to make any adequate allowance for entrepreneur activity except as exerted to furthering the exploitation of the laborer."

Such is the *aplomb* with which the really astounding statement is made, that even one familiar with the style and methods of anti-Marxist "critical analyzers" feels the breath taken out of him—for a second.

Does not Marx say: "Capitalist production only then really begins, as we have already seen, when each individual capital employs simultaneously a comparatively large number of laborers; when consequently the labor-process is carried on on an extensive scale and yields, relatively, large quantities of products. A greater number of laborers working together, at the same time, in one place (or, if you will, in the

same field of labor), in order to produce the same sort of commodity under the mastership of one capitalist, constitutes, both historically and logically, the starting point of capitalist production”—are not these Marx’s words? Why, yes, literally, on page 311 {of *Capital*}, Swan Sonnenschein and Co. edition. And what is this “mastership of one capitalist” if not entrepreneurship? And what does Marx call that but historically and logically the starting point of capitalist production? Can our critical analyst of Marxism have overlooked the great chapter on “Co-operation” in which this and similar passages occur?

As one reads on, asking these questions to himself, he comes to the immediately following, the opposite page of Prof. Skelton’s “Critical Analysis” where Marx is quoted:

“Just as the offensive power of a squadron of cavalry, or the defensive power of a regiment of infantry, is essentially different from the sum of the offensive or defensive powers of the individual cavalry or infantry soldiers taken separately, so the sum total of the mechanical forces exerted by isolated workmen differs from the social force that is developed, when many hands take part simultaneously in one and the same undivided operation.” {p. 315}

As one reads this passage he exclaims: “Why, our critical analyzer surely is familiar with the chapter on ‘Co-operation.’ The passage is quoted from that chapter, which amply and repeatedly fills the alleged ‘astounding gap’ regarding the entrepreneur in the Marxian theory!” But the reader’s belief regarding the fullness of the critical analyzer’s reading is no longer formulated than it is shattered. Immediately after quoting the passage Prof. Skelton asks:

“Does a Ney or a Sheridan count for nothing in a cavalry charge?”<sup>1</sup>

Assuredly they do—but the bourgeois is neither a Ney, nor a Sheridan, leastwise is a Ney and Sheridan rolled in one.

The question whether a Ney or a Sheridan count for nothing betrays the fact that, critical analyzer tho’ he considers himself, Prof. Skelton only skimmed over the chapter on “Co-operation.” The question reveals the fact that that chapter is

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<sup>1</sup> [Napoleonic Marshal Michel Ney (1769–1815) and U.S. Civil War General Philip Henry Sheridan (1831–1888) were both cavalry officers.—*Editor*.]

substantially a closed book to our Professor. The question betrays the fact that our Professor does not know that in that very chapter Marx demonstrates the importance of the Neys and the Sheridans, and that he also demonstrates the false claim concerning the capitalist manufacturer being the Ney or the Sheridan.

Let us now introduce Marx's *Capital* to our John A. Macdonald Professor of Political Science.

As to the important mission that Marx demonstrates the Neys and Sheridans to fill in production, the following passage (p. 321) will illustrate:

“All combined labor on a large scale requires, more or less, a directing authority, in order to secure the harmonious working of the individual activities, and to perform the general functions that have their origin in the action of the combined organism, as distinguished from the action of its separate organs. A single violin player is his own conductor; *an orchestra requires a separate one.*” {De Leon's emphasis}

As to the falsity of the claim that the bourgeois is the orchestra director, or, in Prof. Skelton's language, a Ney or a Sheridan, Marx says (p. 322):

“Just as at first the capitalist is relieved from actual labor so soon as his capital has reached that minimum amount with which capitalist production, as such, begins, so now, he hands over the work of direct and constant supervision of the individual workmen, and groups of workmen, to a special kind of wage laborer. An industrial army of workmen, under the command of a capitalist, requires, like a real army, officers (managers), and sergeants (foremen, overlookers), who, while the work is being done, command in the name of the capitalist. *The work of supervision becomes their established and exclusive function.*” {De Leon's emphasis}

Nor did Marx leave the matter at that point. Having specified who the Neys and Sheridans of production actually are, having shown them to be wage slaves, Marx then sums up the matter from the other side with this master stroke (p. 323):

“It is not because he is a leader of industry that a man is a capitalist; on the contrary, he is a leader of industry because he is a capitalist. The leadership of industry is an attribute of capital, just as in feudal times the functions of general and judge were attributes of landed property.” In other words, it is not because he is a Ney or a Sheridan that the bourgeois is a capitalist, it is because he is a capitalist

that he assumes the honors, while others fill the actual functions of the Neys and Sheridans—the same as at their regattas the Iselins<sup>2</sup> prance in nautical titles, while paid wage slaves perform the functions and display the talents of commodores.

Prof. Skelton means with his question—“Does a Ney or a Sheridan count for nothing in a cavalry charge?”—first, to iterate his assertion that Marx knows not the Neys or Sheridans of production; and, secondly, to prove the bourgeois’ claim to Ney-and-Sheridanship. Had Prof. Skelton read *Capital* he would have learned that, as to the first, Marx expressly proves the existence and function of the Neys and Sheridans; and, as to the second, that Marx as expressly disproves the capitalist’s title to the names of offices.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.  
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<sup>2</sup> [A reference to banking capitalist and “yachtsman” Charles Oliver Iselin (d. Jan. 11, 1932)—*Editor*.]