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ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

“THE PUBLIC GOOD.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

ANENT the Pennsylvania Railroad Tunnel franchise a great squabble has arisen among the Money-Bags who control the capitalist press. Some favor and some do not favor the granting of the franchise. And both sets set themselves up as deciding for “the public good.” Opportunity is hereby afforded to kill two flies with one clap.

Who set up these papers? Was a public vote taken upon them? Indeed not! A set of Money-Bags met and decided to set up a newspaper business, the same as some other set may have met on the same day and hour and decided to set up a peanut stand business. In the one case as in the other, the concern is a private undertaking started for private profit. “The public,” in such cases, is taken into consideration exactly in the same way that fish are taken into consideration by excursionists on a fishing expedition, or people embarking in the fishing business—to be caught. Passing impudent is, accordingly, the impudence of capitalist papers when they set up the claim that they represent “The Public.” And there lies one fly.

The other fly is this: Ad nauseam we are told that we are a homogeneous people, not divided into classes. The claim has been so thoroughly trituated that one should think those who make it would feel ashamed to repeat it. But shame is no part of the Capitalist Class make-up. Accordingly, the claim reappears in the pretense that these papers are speaking for “the public good,” and that they represent the public. In reappearing the claim furnishes the ammunition to blow it up into fragments.

As already shown, these papers do not essentially differ from any other peanut stand. And yet they fill the eyes of the unthinking multitude. Somebody speaks through them. Who speaks? Sir Money-Bags. Why does not the multitude? Because it has no wealth with which to set up such well equipped newspaper peanut stands. In other

words, the fact that these papers exist and can pretend to speak for “The Public” is a proof of the existence of the classes, and is a further proof of class domination; the property-holding class alone is heard; the other class is not heard, cannot be heard, is not counted.

And thus “The Public” is in this as in all other instances, narrowed down to our RULERS. One set, holding stock of the Pennsylvania Railroad Corporation, declares itself in favor of the tunnel under this city; the other set, holding stock of the New York Central Railroad Corporation, to whom a Pennsylvania Railroad tunnel under New York would mean competition for traffic and resulting shrinkage of dividends, opposes the tunnel,—and both claim to be “The Public”; and one of them goes even so far in its vindication of “The Public” that, in “The Public’s” name, it—a private concern—declares the Aldermen who oppose its views and who have at least gone through the form of a public election—to be “morally and mentally incapable of deciding for the public good”!!!

The spectacle is worth watching—and understanding.

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