

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 5, NO. 191.

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, JANUARY 7, 1905.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

ST. PUBLIC.

By DANIEL DE LEON

PAUL Lafargue has wittily described capitalist charity as robbing wholesale and returning retail. Had Lafargue had before him the report of the Senate Ship Subsidy Committee, charging the Carnegie Steel Trust with “outrage” for selling steel in Belfast for \$24 a ton and in the United States for \$32, and also the report that Carnegie caused to be issued just before, setting forth that his library donations amounted to \$38,000,000—had Lafargue had these two reports before him he might have also defined capitalist charity as intended hush-money for plunder.

The Carnegie plunder is done in two places, upon two distinct classes—it is done in the shop upon his veritable army of over 200,000 workingmen, and it is done in the market upon his fellow capitalists. The plunder in the shop proceeds upon the lines followed by all other capitalists. It consists in allowing the workers about 17 per cent. of the value that they produce and, consequently, in appropriating 83 per cent. of the fruit of Labor’s toil. The plunder in the market does not directly concern the working class, except in so far as the process may shed light upon capitalist morality, patriotism and other virtues. A leading customer of Carnegie’s is the U.S. Government. Under that Government’s protecting wing he thrives and is enabled to plunder the workingmen. One should think that common gratitude would induce him to treat the Government handsomely, all the more since his goods are used in the “patriotic” endeavor to defend the country. But gratitude is not the capitalist’s stock in trade, and Carnegie “lays it upon” his patron, the Government: while he sells his steel abroad for \$24 a ton he “soaks” the U.S. Government to the tune of \$32.

As bandits are said to lay part of their robberies at some favorite shrine so as to earn the Saint’s goodwill, the Carnegies realize that such a process of double

bleeding as they carry on must arouse opposition. They might possibly bleed the workers in safety, but to bleed their own Government, besides, is more risky. Provision must be made against a growl. In approved bandit style, Carnegie proceeded to lay his offerings at the shrine of St. Public. St. Public, in this particular instance, is actually a third party. The plundered Working Class has no opportunity to profit by the “library offering”; and as to the ruling and governmentally plundered Capitalist Class, they do not care for such institutions, their shadow never darkens any library’s threshold let alone such smaller fry affairs as Carnegie’s. St. Public, in this instance, being neither of the directly plundered Working Class, nor the indirectly plundered ruling Capitalist Class, is not aware of the indirect plunder practiced upon itself; it only is aware of the donation; and it at least muffles, if it does not hush, the growl against the donor.

It now remains to be seen whether the growl in the Senate will be loud enough to be hushed by the donations at the shrine of St. Public.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded October 2007

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