

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 6, NO. 209.

NEW YORK, THURSDAY, JANUARY 25, 1906.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

BILGE-WATER, OR SHIPPING THE SEA?

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE report of the Federal Secretary of the Treasury discloses a state of things in the customs branch of the Government that suggests the question, Is this "best of all possible" Governments, which capitalism bountifully bestows upon the land, simply making some little bilge-water, or is its ship actually shipping the sea?

It now turns out that, in not fewer than fifty-one ports of the land, custom-houses are maintained, with an aggregate number of two hundred and three employes, in which the customs expenses exceed the receipts. A closer inspection of the figures brings out a startling state of things.

The receipts in these fifty-one custom houses amount to \$47,242.94; the expenses run up to \$156,185.67. In other words, the expenses exceed the receipts by \$108,942.73. Or putting it still more graphically, it costs on an average \$3.30 to collect \$1!

Still more startling are the results upon a detailed inquiry into these fifty-one Government establishments.

The lowest cost to collect \$1 is in the port of Plymouth, Mass. There it costs \$1.38. From that minimum the cost rapidly rises. In not less than fifteen ports the cost of collecting \$1 exceeds \$10:

In the port of Chattanooga, Tenn., it costs \$11.76 to collect \$1;

In the port of La Crosse, Wis., it costs \$14.23 to collect \$1;

In the port of Frenchman Bay, Me., it costs \$17.23 to collect \$1;

In the port of Rock Island, Ill., it costs \$18.14 to collect \$1;

In the port of Great Egg Harbor, N.J., it costs \$26.81 to collect \$1;

In the port of Galena, Ill., it costs \$33.66 to collect \$1;

In the port of Teche, La., it costs \$35.08 to collect \$1;

In the port of Eastern, Md., it costs \$42.07 to collect \$1;

In the port of Southern Oregon, Ore., it costs \$42.30 to collect \$1;

In the port of Sag Harbor, N.Y., it costs \$67.73 to collect \$1;

In the port of St. Mary's, Ga., it costs \$83.92 to collect \$1;

In the port of Tappahonoc, Va., it costs \$125.04 to collect \$1;

In the port of Annapolis, Md., it costs \$185.88 to collect \$1;

In the port of Cherrystone, Va., it costs \$200.23 to collect \$1;

Finally, the grand climax is reached in the port of Albemarle, N.C., where it costs \$321.38 to collect \$1. There the receipts are the vast amount of \$5.00, the expenses \$1,606.94!

Are these "Custom Houses" asylums for social invalids? What else can they be? The staunchest ship may make bilge-water. The expenditure of \$321.38 to collect \$1, a total expenditure of \$156,185.67 to collect \$47,242.94—that is not "bilge-water", it is the "sea" that is being shipped.

The capitalist ship is cranky. It leaks at its every rib. One day it is the President's crony Bishop who has to be provided for with a \$10,000 sinecure; another day it is the crony of some President's crony who has to be provided for with a pension; a third day it is some other invalid who has to be given some idle berth in some other department; and so on indefinitely. In these latter instances the leak feature of the ship is concealed. It stands out clear as a pike, however, when it turns out that the "business" capitalist Government, that the Government of that social system which prides itself upon its business ability and claims the right to rule by virtue of that particular virtue or allegation of virtue, is discovered paying a minimum of \$1.38, and as high as \$321.38 to collect \$1, or its business establishment breaks down.

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

Uploaded February 2009

slpns@slp.org