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SECOND EDITORIAL

STANDARD OIL AND THE PRESS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

DURING January, a popular magazine laid bare the methods by which Leopold, the Belgian king, utilized the press to influence sentiment and action in favor of his heinous exploitation of the Congo. Last week, at a hearing of the Interstate Commerce Commission, the proprietor of an advertising agency, disclosed the fact that he purchased space in newspapers and filled it up with reading matter favorable to the Standard Oil Company and its interests. These are the latest of many instances, proving the press a subsidized agent of capitalism in its worst forms. As such they are of grave importance, to the working class, especially.

The members of the working class believe that the press is free. They cling to the obsolete idea that the press is under no obligation to any particular class; and that, as a consequence, it is the friend of all classes, the working class especially. With the facts now being brought to light, it should be clear to them that the freedom of the press is restricted by the amount of the subsidy paid. The biggest subsidizer rules the press. The airing of working class grievances or a defense of working class interests in its columns are, consequently, tabooed. The capitalist pays the subsidy and receives the aid of the press in turn.

The argument may be carried still further. The members of the working class believe in free speech. They believe the press is an aid to this end. But is speech free when moulded by malevolent means? "The truth shall make ye free," said the prophets of old. And so nothing but the truth is freedom, whether in speech or in morality. The press keeps the working class in bondage by the publication of statements that are manufactured in the interests of the capitalist class. These create a prejudice unfavorable to labor; they divide the true friends of labor, and they aid in the creation of conditions in which labor submits without protest, for

fear of losing its livelihood.

A free press and free speech do not exist. These are dependent on capitalism. Nor is labor free; it, too, is dependent on that which restricts the freedom of both press and speech.

When the class interests created by capitalism disappear, and Socialism makes economic liberty possible to all, then will a free press, free speech and free labor be realities instead of phrases.

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