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EDITORIAL

PRIVATE PROPERTY UNDER SOCIALISM.

By DANIEL DE LEON

INFORMATION is asked at this office by an Albany, N.Y., correspondent as follows:

“Does International Socialism demand the ultimate ownership by the commonwealth of all real estate, in other words, would it be possible for me to own a farm or a lot in the city individually as my private property, which I could sell, or bequeath to whom I saw fit?”

International Socialism demands the collective ownership of all the necessaries for production. From the reasons, and the reasoning, for the demand, there flow the following conclusions:

1. The producer is entitled to the full social share of his product;
2. He can do therewith what he likes—hoard it at home if he has preserved or inherited the bourgeois mania for cumulation; leave all of it, less what he needs for comfort (as he understands comfort), banked in the collective stores; or consume it: or bequeath it to whom he sees fit.
3. If he should delight in owning a machine of production of his own, and the accumulated share of his product is large enough to indulge the whim, there can be nothing to prevent him from exchanging his share of his product for the equivalent in machinery. In no wise would such a freak endanger society. He will not find fools enough to work for him and at a lower rate of returns than they could earn in the Commonwealth's factories, and for returns which his individual and, therefore, unavoidably paltrier economic means of production, would allow him to pay. His private ownership of a machine would no wise affect the social function (securing to the worker the opportunity to work and the full social share of his product) of the collectively owned machinery in operation.
4. As to selling—none of the myriad producers can himself produce the myriad

things he needs. Each can produce only one thing, or a few. When each producer draws out of the collective warehouse goods, produced by others, to the value corresponding with vouchers held by him for values contributed by him to the common stock, the essence of sale takes place—value being exchanged for value. It is hard to figure the reason, the occasion, or the opportunity for any other kind of sale in the Socialist Commonweal. The imaginable occasions are negligible—as, for instance, if the freak who managed to get together machinery owned by himself, should tire of his whim, and find another freak to whom he would want to sell it. He certainly could, or whatever consideration the two freak souls may agree upon.

5. Land is a necessary of production. It is, differently from machinery, a necessary of production that Labor does not and can not produce. For the converse reason (No. 3) that the producer can become the private owner of machinery of production, he never could become the private owner of land. Not being the private owner of such a necessary for production, he would have none to sell or bequeath.

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