

EDITORIAL

A TITANIC DEMONSTRATION.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE officer of a steamship company, commenting on the disaster of the *Titanic*, is reported to have said unofficially:

“Rivalry between lines and attempts to provide new vessels with features attracting public attention have caused deckroom that should have been filled with life rafts to be used for extra smoking rooms, sun parlors, and the like.”

Extra smoking rooms, sun parlors, “and the like” are attractions not furnished to the steerage. They are attractions furnished to first class passengers mainly.

If the steamers that are equipped with these attractions took first class passengers only, then the statement made by the steamship officer would amount simply to saying that first class passengers pay with the increased danger of drowning for the increased attractions offered to, and enjoyed by them.

But the steamers that are provided with the attractions take in steerage passengers also.

The figures of the *Titanic*'s passengers give 710 steerage passengers—100 more than first and second class passengers put together. Adding to the 710 the 860 members of the crew, the proletarian contingent on the *Titanic* was 1,570.

While the less than one-half capitalist contingent on the *Titanic* at least received “attractions” in return for the increased risk of drowning, to the more than double proletarian contingent the increased risk of drowning was thrown in for “good measure.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson pointed in one of his essays to the modern ocean steamship as the condensed picture of modern society.

The *Titanic*'s catastrophe should not oppress the mind to the extent of its failing to appreciate the titanic demonstration of Emerson's estimate.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded May 2013

slpns@slp.org