

The People.

VOL. VII, NO. 9

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, MAY 30, 1897

PRICE 3 CENTS

EDITORIAL

“No One Can Become Rich by Legislation.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

The working class should read carefully the debate that is going on among the capitalists on the subject of the tariff bill, now pending in Congress. Everyone cannot read the debates in Congress on the subject; but everyone can read the debates going on among the various editors of the various capitalist organs, misnamed “organs of public opinion.” If these articles are perused, the reader will quickly be struck by a valuable observation.

Every time there seems to be a danger of the working class taking the political bit into its own mouth and running away with it to promote its own interests, a howl is raised in chorus by the above named editors of the “organs of public opinion” to the effect that the workingmen are tugging at the wrong end in their desire to improve their condition; that the hope to change the social ills by the conquest of the public powers is “rainbow chasing;” in short, that “no one can become rich by legislation;” wherever riches may come from, we are at such times admonished in chorus by these editors, they do not come from legislation. Now, let us turn to some of their statements made anent the proposed tariff bill.

A Louisiana paper that represents the interests of the “American Cane Growers’ Association” is up in arms against the Senate sugar schedule, and says:

“The Senate sugar schedule means that the masses shall be taxed to the end that fat dividends may be paid to the owners of the sugar trust.”

And a New England paper that failed to get hush money from the sugar trust indignantly cries out:

“Those not familiar with the refining business may not realize that the sugar schedule of the Senate really means an enormous addition to the sugar trust’s profits.”

“Enormous additions?” “Fat dividends?” How can that be if it is true, as these

identical present paladins of the people only recently said, that “No one can become rich by legislation?” Surely here is a contradiction!

Let’s see further. A Chicago organ of the Western cattle raisers insists that:

“There is no use concealing the truth. Either leather is put on the free list and the cattle raisers will be ruined, or leather is put on the dutiable list and the cattle raisers will be able once more to see the smiles of prosperity upon their homesteads.”

“Smiles of prosperity,” if a certain piece of legislation goes through? “Ruin” if an opposite piece of legislation gain{s} the day? Surely the times are out of gear! What becomes of the admonition, so unctuously bestowed upon the workers that “no one can become rich by legislation?”

Fact is that legislation is the strategic point of private wealth and of all that thereby hangs. Remove legislation, do away with it altogether, and our glorious capitalist class are as weak as soft shell crabs. Blow up Congress and the other branches of Government, and wealth will no longer be a stagnant pool in the dirty hands of our elite. It will fluctuate backward and forward like water driven by a hurricane. It is due to this fact that, on the one hand, the capitalist class seeks to keep possession of the government, of the legislation-dispensing and enforcing powers, and that, on the other hand, the intelligent workingmen seek to gain control of those powers so as to be able to legislate wealth into the clean hands of the proletariat.

The key to the fortress of the capitalist class is the government of the nation. Onwards, proletarians, to its conquest!

[Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.](#)

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