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EDITORIAL

HOW, “HOLD IT”?

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE New York *Evening Journal* has issued a handbill containing some advice upon how to become a free man.

Who would not be free? According to the *Evening Journal*, the thing is dead easy. All that needs to be done is to **buy real estate, the right kind, and hold it.**

There is a double absurdity involved in the proposition.

The first is that it amounts to saying that, in order to become a free man, a man must start with being free. He who has money enough to buy real estate of the right kind can hardly be pronounced non-free from the *Evening Journal* standpoint.

The second absurdity is no less so. “The wise man will buy and hold a piece of this earth for himself,” sayeth the wisdom-imparter on the *Evening Journal*. Aye, indeed! Hold it! That’s the rub!

There is not, between real estate and other lucrative property, any material difference—except in that the holding of real estate is much harder to the small holder than is his holding of a small shop.

In the matter of both, competition drives the smaller holder to the wall and flattens him out. If the small holder be a holder of real estate, then he is in even a worse hole. Upon his head blows a rain and hail storm that the holder of a small shop is exempt of. The small holder of real estate is the victim of assessors—a peculiar vermin of capitalist republican production. Assessments for “gradings”; assessments for cutting roads; assessments for keeping them in repair; assessments for a score of other purposes, which, like blackbirds, come nobody knows whence, and evaporate, nobody knows whither.

If the small shop-holder is kept busy chasing the wolf from his door, the small

real estate holder is worn out chasing away, not one wolf, but a whole pack of them.

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