

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 2, NO. 23.

NEW YORK, TUESDAY, JULY 23, 1901.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

MUNICIPALIZATION AGAIN.

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YESTERDAY'S Albany correspondence proves two things. It proves that the impression left by the late trolley strike in that city, together with the conduct of the militia, goes deep and wide and is lasting; it also shows that the Socialist Labor Party, with its steady, straight, unterrified agitation, is feared by the capitalists. The launching in Albany of a new political party, the "Independent Citizens' Union," upon a municipalization platform, and the serious effort immediately put forth to rope in the Socialist Labor Party tell the tale quite strongly.

Next to the issue of "taxation," perhaps even abreast of it, that of "municipalization" is the most natural lure for capitalism to hold out to the masses. How clear it looks and sounds to say: "Socialism is against the private ownership of capital; railway lines is capital; let us municipalize them; that is a step in the direction of Socialism"! And, yet, however clear such a theory looks and sounds, there is none falsier.

Is the Police force a private undertaking in private hands? No, it is municipalized. Is the militia a private undertaking in private hands? No, it is run by the State. Is the military a private undertaking in private hands? No, it is nationalized.—And yet with the regularity of clock-work the municipalized Police is seen clubbing the workingmen in strikes; the State-run militia is seen shooting them down; the nationalized military is seen locking them up in Idaho Bull Pens. Nationalization, obviously, is no charm to shield the worker from the brutality of the capitalist shirker.

Perhaps it might be objected that these instances are not germane in that they do not represent either labor or services in productive work, and come only incidentally into play. While the objection is not tenable, let it pass. What of the Brooklyn Bridge railroad? That certainly is a productive service. Is it a private undertaking, in private hands? No, it is municipalized. What of the Onondaga

county salt works? That was productive. Was it a private undertaking? No, it was State-run. What about the Post-office? Is it a private undertaking, in private hands? No, it is nationalized.—And yet the wages of the Bridge employees have suffered cut-down upon cut-down and their hours are inhumanly long, so long that, owing to their exposed work, mortality has been great among them, while all the while the leisure and wealth of the capitalist class has been on the increase; the Onondaga salt workers were paid starvation wages and the concern was run into the ground so as to give a pretext for passing it over to private parties for a song; and as to the Post Office, it is doubtful whether in the sweatshops of the East Side there are worse sweated girls than those found in the bagging department at Washington, to say nothing of the many ignominies to which the letter carriers are exposed.

Socialism is against the private ownership of capital. But that does not mean, as the municipalizers would have it appear, that Socialism favors the public ownership of capital by the capitalist class. In other words, Socialism demands the overthrow of the capitalist class, and the placing of the capital in the hands of the workers so that he who works may live and he who can and won't work may do the other thing. Now, then, in a movement with such broad and yet precise aims of justice, municipalization is not a means, it is a result. The means and, therefore, the immediate aim, is the conquest of the public powers—now owned by the capitalist class as they own their coats,—by the working class, upon the class-conscious platform and with the class-conscious program of Socialism, to wit, the abolition of the wages system of labor, to the end that he who works may live in the full affluence and with the full dignity that becomes the citizen of the 20th Century.

As evidenced by the facts and illustrations mentioned above, the “municipalization” proposed by the Albany capitalists is but capitalism in disguise. The S.L.P. will block the swindle.

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

Uploaded April 2006