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EDITORIAL

“GIVING TESTIMONY”.

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AT the Quaker meeting—what else, in point of decorum and saintliness, but a Quaker meeting, a grand collective Quaker meeting, are the collective municipal, State and national legislatures and courts where the political agents of the capitalist class gather to make their devotions?—at the local Quaker meeting held on the 18th of this month in Philadelphia, the City of Brotherly Love rose and “gave testimony”. She has kept it up ever since; and her voice has become louder, her exaltation more vehement by the hour. May her strength hold out, and the “testimony” come out in full.

Philadelphia owns a gas-plant; the same is operated under a lease by a private concern, the United Gas Improvement Company; and the lease is about to expire. On the 18th instant, the Common Council met “to consider propositions.” Two were presented. One proposition came from the United Gas Improvement Company itself: it proposed that the city give it a seventy-five year extension of its lease for twenty-five millions, without any further compensation, and postponing 80-cent gas until the year 1956. The other proposition came from a syndicate headed by Edward B. Smith & Co., responsible bankers of the city. The offer of the Smith syndicate was to lease the plant from the city for seventy-five years; to pay the United Gas Improvement Company not exceeding twenty millions of dollars for its improvements of the lighting plant; to pay to the city an annual rental of \$1,500,000 for the term of the lease, that is to say, \$102,500,000 rent during the seventy-five years, or \$77,500,000 more than the United Gas Improvement Company offered; furthermore, one-third of the net profits during the first ten years, and one-half during the remaining sixty-five years; furthermore to supply municipal lighting free of cost; furthermore, to give the municipality a representation of one-third in the management of the plant; and furthermore, last not least, to stand ready to have

the city direct whether the income of the syndicate should or should not be devoted to a reduction in the price of gas to consumers. These were the two offers. The Common Council rejected the latter and accepted the former.

News of the shameless offer from the United Gas Improvement Company and also of the incomparably more favorable offer from the Smith syndicate had gone abroad in advance, and long in advance had knowledge gone abroad of the collusion between the Common Councilmen and the United Gas Improvement Company. As a consequence, a large number of citizens gathered early in and around the Common Council’s meeting chamber to witness the proceedings. The moment the Common Council rejected the offer from the Smith syndicate and crowned its devotions by accepting the offer from the United Gas Improvement Company, then and there and on the spot the “giving of testimony” at that Quaker meeting started.

Indignant citizens stormed the Common Council’s meeting chamber, carrying halters and bawling “thieves!” “robbers!” at the Common Councilmen; the gentlemen had to be conducted home under police protection; the Mayor decided to veto the action of the Common Council and he began to oust appointive officers in league with them; these rushed to the Courts and obtained temporary injunctions against the Mayor; the Governor has been called upon to convene the legislature in order to fix an earlier date for the “ripper” law to go into effect, a law curtailing the Mayor’s powers;—that is as far as the “giving of testimony” has proceeded so far, but not as far as it promises to proceed. Threats are in the air of injunctions to restrain the Governor from convoking the legislature, and finally, these threats have led to the demonstration of the hollowness of the alleged sanctity of capitalist law and capitalist courts,—the threats to enjoin the Governor have been promptly followed with threats “to enjoin the courts from issuing injunctions”. Seeing that injunctions can only issue from courts, one court will have to enjoin the other!

The situation bids fair to rival the battle of injunctions with which, not so very much more than a generation ago, Jay Gould and the then Commodore Vanderbilt pelted each other together with the courts and officials, whose pockets they respectively stuffed with their stocks. Millions being now again at stake, there can be no doubt but that the “testimony given” and to be given at these Quaker meetings of capitalism—the courts and municipal, State and national legislatures of

the capitalist class—will be of prime capitalist devotional value. May sister Philadelphia’s strength hold out to the end. She is doing nicely.

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