

EDITORIAL

RENT AND TAXES.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE Baltimore, Md., *Public Ownership*, organ of the Socialist party of that city, publishes on the front page of its March 19 issue the municipal platform upon which its party was then conducting its this year's municipal campaign.

The third paragraph of the platform is as follows:

“With an irregular, unreasonable and burdensome system of taxation, the injustice of which is ultimately borne by the rent-paying wage-workers, this city remains filthy,” etc.

However complicated the general question of taxation may be—complicated enough to enable bourgeois interests to deceive the wage-earners with the belief that they are tax-payers, and thereby to capture wage-earners' votes in behalf of schemes that ease bourgeois shoulders of the tax burden which, to-day, only bourgeois shoulders bear—there is one department in which taxation stands out clear as a pike, exposing the fact that the tax comes not out of Labor, but exclusively out of bourgeois pockets. That department is the tax on real estate.

One needs not, in order to approach the question, first furnish himself with the key of political economy. All one needs is eyes clear enough to read the announcements of tax fluctuations on land. If it be true that the rent paying proletariat is burdened by the tax on land, the following state of things would have to be found:—rent rising according as taxes on land rise. In other words, the state of things would have to be that first the tax is imposed or raised, and then rent is increased. Fact is, never once is that the sequel of events. Fact is that first the rent is raised, and then the taxes follow suit, going up. Seeing that the landlord first raises his rent; seeing that the landlord, if left alone, would pocket the whole of the increased rent; seeing, finally, that he does not, but that he has to shell out part of

his added rental income to the tax gatherer;—seeing all this, the claim that the wage-worker is, as a “rent-payer” the ultimate bearer of the burden of taxation is the falsest of political economy.

The share of the wageworker in the product of his labor depends not on taxation, prices, or aught of the sort. It depends upon the supply of and demand for him in the Labor Market. The law of values, with its corollary the law of prices and of wages, settles that. Accordingly, not the tax gatherer is the wageworker’s scourge, but the exploiting capitalist; not the tax-collector’s office is the place where the wage-worker is plundered, but the shop in which he labors as a wage-slave; not taxation—“irregular,” or “unreasonable” though it may be to the bourgeois—but capitalism; THAT is the “burdensome system” that the wageworker staggers under, and he staggers under that, not “ultimately,” but “firstly and all the time.”

In America, where capitalism operates untrammelled, where, accordingly, economic laws “work clean,” the introduction of Taxation in a Socialist platform is a blunder. Every vote, possibly captured at present by such a molasses platform, is a vote that will have to be dearly paid for later. A revolutionary Movement, recruited from flies, is bound to land where flies ever wind up in—the ash barrel.

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