

EDITORIAL

THE CASE BECKER.

By DANIEL DE LEON

WITH monotonous regularity there is a "Police scandal" periodically uncovered. The uncoverings take place in all our large cities. They take place in New York; they take place in Philadelphia; they take place in Cincinnati; they take place in Chicago; they take place in St. Louis;—and so across the continent to San Francisco. As a matter of course, New York being the land's metropolis, its financial hub, its capital in fact, the scandals "uncovered" here lead in point of dimensions and in point of bad odors.

Whereupon, in New York, as elsewhere, there is a spasm of moral indignation; there is a great scurrying of feet; there is a deafening racket of the rusty machinery of Law and Order, suddenly in motion, creaking and whizzing; there is the threat of a shower of indictments; there may also be some trials and a few convictions—and then the bustle comes to a dead stop.

What is it that has happened?

The locomotive of Law and Order ran up against "Higher-up"; and then it ran down and back again into its old stall.

Lieutenant Becker of our New York Police Force is under arrest. Indeed, he is locked up without bail. Gamblers have peached upon him. Graft nigh to \$3,000,000, shared by Becker with only "two others," is being reported in detail. Worst of all, Becker is charged with direct complicity in the murder of the Rosenthal gambler, whence his imprisonment without bail. That is the scandal of this season. Will this scandal run the course of others?

When the notorious Inspector Byrne was run down twenty and odd years ago, in the course of the Lexow Committee's effort to go "higher up," and still higher, Byrne brazenly announced that he could, if he would, mention the names of some pious pew-holders who had "beaten a path from their church-door to a certain house

of ill fame.” The announcement did the trick. It palsied even the intrepidity of the counsel for the Lexow Committee, the subsequent Recorder Goff. Byrne had to step out of the Force—and withdrew to Wall street where his connections with Pillars of Society was turned to profitable use, until he was gathered unto the bosom of Abraham. It was a clear case of the locomotive of Law and Order having bumped good and hard against “Higher-up,” and come to a dead stop—derailed.

It will be interesting to watch the career of the present scandal. Already “Higher-ups” have begun to loom up on the distant horizon. How long will the present locomotive run before it gets a jar by colliding against Higher-up?

The case of Becker, being accompanied with the unusual accompaniment of murder, presents an unusual problem. Nevertheless—to use gamblers’ parlance, seeing we are talking of gamblers—the chances are that the Becker case will strike some kind of snag—and, having done its work, be relegated to oblivion, to be “dug up by those moral scavengers, the Socialists, who revel in the carcasses of the dead and buried past.”

Now, then, what is the work that the Becker case, the same as the Captain Williams case and others before it, is expected to do before it is “hung up”? Why, simply this—install the graft successor of the fallen grafter.

Nine-tenths of the work of the Police is to protect the Ruling Class in the possession of its stolen goods. Officials with such a function to perform naturally graft—and all of them being pious men, they are devout believers in the biblical maxim not to muzzle the ox that threshes the corn.

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