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FIRST EDITORIAL

WHAT IS SAUCE FOR THE GOOSE, SHOULD IT NOT BE SAUCE FOR THE GANDER?

By DANIEL DE LEON

WHAT are the objections most strenuously raised by the capitalist class against every attempt to enact laws that shall protect the worker from blackmail and oppression? “Individuality!” “Let,” says the indignant capitalist, indignant at any attempt to hamper him by laws intended to shield the workers, “Let there be absolute freedom; manhood and self-reliance are impaired by ‘protective’ laws for labor; let the worker fight his own battles; thus real manhood is developed.”

And yet what notes come to our startled ears from Albany where a Constitutional Convention is now in session? It is a plaintive appeal directed to that body by J.T. Brooks, second vice-president of the Pennsylvania Railroad in which, after he describes the extent to which public officials—Judges, Senators, Governors, Congressmen, etc., etc.—pester the roads for free passes, and blackmail them by introducing bills that are harmful if they do not comply, he asks for “a constitutional provision on this subject, and one broad enough to make it a misdemeanor for any person elected or appointed to any position in the service of the public to ask or receive for himself or any other person free transportation.”

Here is a powerful railroad corporation that, not only looks for protection by a constitutional amendment against imposition, but that seeks to have its hands strengthened against the devices of the legislators!

If labor’s individuality would be affected by protective laws, should we not guard against weakening the individuality of railroad magnates by letting them alone to fight their own battles? If labor would suffer by being shielded, would not

the capitalist suffer likewise? Is not the capitalist tiresomely inconsistent?

The answer is self-evident. But that answer involves another, to wit, the capitalist is inconsistent only in the eyes of those whom he succeeds in humbugging. Those who know aught, know this: that with unswerving consistency, the capitalist pursues his purpose and adheres to the fact that the existing form of government is his private property, and that, consequently, it is preposterous for him to allow his property to be used for the benefit of his wage-slaves, while it is natural, and wholly in the order of things, that it be used exclusively for his own benefit. And right he is.

There is no way out but to wrench that government from his clutches; the workers can do that any election day. There will be no just government until the working class is in power, because the working class is the only class to whose interest and in whose power it is to wipe out class rule.

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