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EDITORIAL

“MUNICIPAL OWNERSHIP.”

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IN a recent report to the State Department, United States Consul Boyle, at Liverpool, gives many facts about the development of “Municipal Socialism,” in Great Britain.

These facts show that “Municipal Socialism” is a caricature of class-conscious Socialism, dealing with the external and not the inherent defects of Capitalism. As such it is on a par with the many schemes of working class betterment by means of which the working class is lulled into a hypnotic sleep, while its labor and exploitation are intensified.

Class-conscious Socialism is the collective ownership of capital for, by and of the working class. Municipal ownership is the ownership of capital by, for and of the capitalist class. This, a few typical facts from the above report makes clear.

It is shown in that report that “Liverpool is one of the foremost cities in Municipal Socialism.” In proof of this, the reader is informed that “its docks are municipalized in a modified way. The system is peculiar to Liverpool. This vast estate, valued at several hundreds of millions of dollars, is administered by a public trust, nearly all the members of which are elected by those who pay dock dues, and the profits, after deducting expenses and payment of interest on capital account, go to improvement, and not to the benefit of a private corporation.”

In other words, under the guise of administering a public trust, the capitalist shipping interests administer this “vast estate” of the municipality of Liverpool, by and for themselves; even going so far as to devote the profits realized from the payment of dock dues to the improvement of their own interests, that is, to the improvement of the docks through which they acquire their wealth and hold upon the commerce of Liverpool.

That the workingmen play no part in this “public trust,” though they are the biggest portion of the “public,” is shown in the fact that they pay no dock dues. That they do not profit from this arrangement is shown in certain facts relating to municipal dwellings in Liverpool. The report states that “the Liverpool municipal dwellings are mostly in the form of blocks of tenement-houses or ‘flats’ three or four stories high.” Again it states, “it is claimed that Liverpool alone among the municipalities of England and Scotland has been successful in supplying a type of building within the financial means of the poorest of the poor.” Who are these poorest of the poor? This is shown by the report when it tells of those tenants for whom municipal dwelling provisions are mainly made:

“MOST OF THESE TENANTS ARE DOCK LABORERS OR A LIKE CLASS.”

There you have it. “Municipal Socialism” has millions to be administered by and for docking capitalists and nothing but cheap dwellings and contempt for “dock laborers or a like class.”

“Municipal Socialism,” according to the report quoted, increased its capitalization in Great Britain from \$465,000,000 in 1875, to \$1,500,000,000 in 1890.

Giving the development of “Municipal Socialism” due credit for this triple increase in twenty-five years, let us see what it has done for the working class of England.

According to Henry George, Jr., the son of his father and advocate of “the public ownership of public utilities,” (another name for “Municipal Socialism”), in this country, a managing director of a large manufacturing establishment, at a meeting of the London Chamber of Commerce, epitomized the industrial condition of the workmen of England thusly:

“The most crucial question of to-day is how to meet the competition of the United States, the American peril. It can only be done by our getting rid, as the Americans do, of that army of employees from 50 to 60 years of age, who retard our industrial progress. It would even be cheaper for us to retire them at half pay and substitute young men. Americans don’t employ men of over 45 years. Men after that age are forced to take positions at lower earnings. Even men with high salaries up to 45 are after that glad to work for one-tenth of what they had been getting when young.”

And this in the “land of Municipal Socialism” to which the American workingman is urged to turn his hopeful gaze when weary of American exploitation! This in the land of

cheap gas, dwellings and car fare, municipal flower-pots, lectures, sterilized milk, John Burns, Keir Hardie and other “public” utilities! Oh! what a fall was there!

“Municipal Socialism” and labor intensification and exploitation go hand-in-hand. Neither will end until Capitalism ends, and Socialism, true, class-conscious Socialism, triumphs.

On then with class-conscious Socialism!

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