

Daniel De Leon

Editorial: An Open Letter To the Workingmen of Flushing, L.I.

Workingmen—Crank and designing men, members of the boss class that lives upon your labor, are buzzing around you to take a hand with them in your approaching local elections. The methods with which they are trying to rope you in are two:

First, the false cry of “Equalization of Taxes”; and

Second, the bait that you take a member of your own ranks and put him on the ticket of one of the old parties.

As to the matter of “Equalization of Taxes”, it is a false cry, as far as your interests are concerned. True enough taxes, as well as every thing else, have to be paid out of the product of your labor. Taxation may, therefore, appear at first as a matter that affects your interests. But it does not in fact. Under the present, the capitalist system of production—where the instruments of labor are owned by the monopolist capitalists, and you are bereft of them—the portion of your own products which you are allowed to keep, i.e., your wages, is about one quarter of what you produce. This quarter you are allowed to preserve because you need it to live; without it you could not work and produce wealth for the capitalist to idle upon. Everything over and above that quarter, everything over and above what you need absolutely to live on, is appropriated, robbed by the capitalist. Under the existing system of production, this robbery is inevitable. It is the inevitable result of your being bereft and the capitalist being in possession of the

Daniel De Leon

machinery of production. Under these circumstances taxation, even of necessities of life, can not affect you, because it affects only that portion of your product that you are fleeced of anyhow. High taxes do not injure you, because your wages must rise to enable you to purchase the necessities of life; low taxes do not benefit you, because your wages would go down in proportion. Under the capitalist system your earnings, your wages, depend upon the minimum of your necessities, whatever the taxes may be. But taxation is a matter of great interest to those who appropriate the three-fourths of your labor; each wants to have the biggest share of these three-fourths; and all their wranglings about taxation are nothing else but the quarrels of the spoilers for the spoil.

As to putting on a capitalist ticket a member of your own class, shut your ears to the proposition! If you esteem a fellow wage laborer, keep him off from such a ticket; if you wish his perdition, put him on it. From John Jarrett down to Florence F. Donovan, all the workingmen who take office under or go on the ticket of the capitalist class become degraded beyond recovery. You cannot touch the pitch of capitalism without soilure. The workingman who places himself in line with capitalists on the same political ticket, winds up always by betraying his own class; and when he has done that he is dumped by the capitalists themselves. No workingman ever goes, or tries to go, on a capitalist ticket unless he has no faith in his own class, and tries to improve his own condition at their expense. He, who starts that way sooner or later ends disastrously for himself and his fellows. Only such people as wish you ill can propose to you such a plan.

Instead of listening to such deceptive overtures, start your own party, the party of Labor, upon your own, the only platform possible for Labor. Demand the reacquisition by the people of the land and the capital of the nation, as your brothers are doing in all civilized countries; cast your votes for that ticket and that platform only; and drill the political battalion of Flushing, that will join the Grand National Army

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for the emancipation of labor. Thus you can make progress; all else is turning in a circle, if not worse.

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*A De Leon editorial transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the
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