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EDITORIAL

WASH OUT THE BABY!

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE United States Senate Committee that is to “investigate the railroad question” has given new life to two old slogans. The sapient articles untold, that are intended to intimidate the Committee, are unbeknown to themselves adding fuel to the Socialist flame. The real essence of these articles, at least, all that {they} are good for, is to bring out the existing conflict of private interests and the impossibility of any reform. The articles help to point out how similar the sight is of the tangle of capitalist interests to the tangle that feudal interests presented to the uprising bourgeois. The similarity in premises naturally suggests similar methods. The bourgeois also tried his hand at tinkering feudalism: he gave up the job: and simply pulled the nuisance up by the roots. And, accordingly, the slogan now rises with renewed vigor from the Socialist camp—“The Gordian knot can not be unravelled, cut it through! The railroads must be owned and operated by, through and for the people!”—No flies on that slogan.

It is answered by another. From the capitalist camp comes the response—“To make the railroads public property as a means to cure the evils complained of, is to wash out the baby with the bath!”

Who, what is the darling baby that we are asked to be so careful lest we wash it out?

That “baby” is the system of ownership under which about fourteen irresponsible men have it in their power to build up or smite a city and region.—Wash out that “baby”!

That “baby” is the system of ownership under which, for the sake of “dividends,” the employees’ lives and limbs are exposed and sacrificed as no soldiers’ lives and limbs are sacrificed in the bloodiest battles.—Wash out that “baby”!

That “baby” is the system of ownership under which the lives of the traveling public are at the mercy of the “baby,” who, for the sake of still more dividends, reduces its operating expenses both by reduction of the operators to a wholly insufficient number, and by the reduction of the earnings of these and the lengthening of their hours of work to a degree that is inhuman.—Wash out that “baby”!

That “baby” is the system of ownership under which the most insidious form of slavery is yoked upon the neck of the worker.—Wash out that “baby”!

That “baby” is the system of ownership under which morality wilts and hypocrisy is watered—“freedom” is preached, and slavery is practised; “morality” is preached, and stock-exchange gambling dens are exalted; “truthfulness” is declaimed, and lying is done. It is a baby that corrodes the people’s vitals. Like all despotism it saps the moral fibre.—Wash out that “baby”!

The “baby” that we are warned not to wash out is a hideous monster—why, it is the very urchin that modern society is after. Unless the bath-tub of modern society is washed out along with that “baby,” the fresh water will continue to be as filthy as the old.

Wash out that “baby”! The job can be done none too soon!

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

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