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EDITORIAL

THEIR OPPORTUNITY.

By DANIEL DE LEON

MAYOR Low has written two letters, one to President Vreeland of the Metropolitan Company, and one to Vice-President Skitt of the Manhattan, asking reasons why improvements could not be made in the schedules of cars and trains for the benefit of the public, such improvements, for instance, as more cars and trains, and two conductors on the street cars during the rush hours, one to collect fares and one to attend to the passengers.

This is the opportunity of Messrs. Vreeland and Skitt. Their answer should be about as follows:

Hon. Seth Low,
Mayor of New York.

Dear Sir:—In answering your questions why certain improvements, recommended by you, can not be made, which is the same as saying that we decline to make them, we respectfully beg to give our reasons:

1. We are stockholders and high-salaried officers in the concerns. Both capacities militate against your suggestion.

As stockholders, our dividends depend upon the profits of the concerns. The higher the running expenses of a concern, the lower are its profits. More cars and one more conductor on each means an increased pay-roll.

As high-salaried officials, our position depends upon our success in increasing profits. A policy that would decrease profits would cost us our official heads: our high salaries and the “Christmas gifts,” which we now add to our dividends-plunder, would be gone.

As you are neither a stockholder of, nor a high-salaried official on, these roads such ills, as herein set forth, may and do leave you cool. Not us. We are not in this business for our health.

2. The favor of “the public” does not concern us: we are in business, not in politics. It is otherwise with you. You are in politics, not in business. What interests you leaves us cool; as cool as you are left in what interests us. In other words, the shoe does not pinch us both on the same spot.

3. We are no hypocrites: and that is what you are. As a capitalist yourself, you know as well as we that your propositions are unacceptable. But as a politician, currying favor to improve the chances of his much-damaged chances for re-election in an approaching campaign, you are playing to the galleries. You are trying to sail into a re-election on the top of a wave that you seek to raise against us. We think there is enough demagoguery now. We don't propose to help the evil along. Just keep your broken ante-election pledges; just keep your appointees from selling out the city to the New York Central as your Corporation Attorney Rives tried to; just mind your business.

For all the above weighty reasons we respectfully decline.

With the assurances of our high consideration, we have the honor to subscribe ourselves,

Yours, etc.

'Tis to be hoped Messrs. Vreeland and Skitt won't miss their opportunity to give this example of civic virtue. It will do immeasurably more good than improved transit accommodations.

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