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EDITORIAL

TWO FLIES WITH ONE CLAP.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE *Shoe and Leather Reporter* for last month reports under the head of “Labor Conditions in Boot and Shoe Factories” and the sub-head “General Characteristics of the Employees”:

“Of the families the heads of which were native Americans 17 per cent. as against 13 per cent. of the families the heads of which were foreign-born owned their own homes.”

Of course, “owning one’s own home” does not necessarily mean the happy status of not having to pay tribute to the employing class for the privilege of shelter. Many a home is “owned” that staggers under a mortgage, ownership being only titular, nominal. And that is the case with 99 out of every 100 homes “owned” by workingmen. But let it be assumed that the home-owning employes of the boot and shoe factories actually own an unencumbered home.

Readers of *The People* will remember a recent citation made from Mr. Victor L. Berger’s *Social Democratic Herald* in the issue of October 28 of which Mr. Berger stated over his signature that “with the help of some fools of the middle class who are willing that the capitalists should dodge millions so long as they can dodge a few paltry dollars,” the wealthy cajole and overawe the assessors “to shift the burden upon the working class by unjust assessments, by overassessing the little property of the workingman,” etc.

The comment of *The People* on that passage, it will be remembered, was: “The case is here clear and distinct. It is not the complicated case of ‘indirect taxation,’ so frequently availed of by ignorance, or chicanery, to make out that the working class, altho’ a propertyless class, does pay taxes. The case here presented is of direct taxation; it is the case of ‘assessors assessing’; it is the case of only actual holders of ac-

tual property; it distinctly states ‘the little property of the workingman’; and the conduct of the assessors, whom the ‘big manufacturers or big merchants’ are described as ‘cajoling and overawing,’ is stated to result in the {‘}shifting of the burden upon’—Whom? the exceptional workingmen who own assessable property? Why, no;—upon the WORKING CLASS!” And *The People* showed that “under the hullaballoo of wishing to redress a wrong done to the WORKING CLASS—notoriously a propertyless class—we see Mr. Berger again raising an issue than can affect only exceptional members of the proletariat, but that is vital to the MIDDLE CLASS bourgeois in their struggle with the ‘big manufacturers or merchants.’”

How notoriously a propertyless class the working class is, how exceptional those members of the working class are who hold property on which assessors shift the burden of taxation, the figures of the *Shoe and Leather Reporter* betray with regard to the employes of the boot and shoe factories:—13 per cent. of one set of employes and 117 per cent. of another set by no means denote 30 per cent. of the total. Even such a percentage would be small. Considering, however, that 13 per cent. of one set and 17 of another gives a much smaller percentage of the total, a conception may be formed, on the one hand, of the rarity of “their own-home-owning” wage earners, and of the statistical class jugglery with which the employing class seeks to conceal the fact; and, on other hand, of the bourgeois and anti-proletarian posture of Mr. Berger, along with the posture of his Milwaukee so-called Socialist administration.

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