

EDITORIAL

SCHENECTADY ON THE CANVAS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THERE is enough social dynamite in the New York *Evening Post's* report of the 13th of this month on the situation in Schenectady to blow the capitalist social system to kingdom come.

Of course, it all turns upon the recent election of the Socialist party's municipal ticket with the Rev. George R. Lunn at its head for Mayor, after a campaign in which, next to the asphalt contracts for paving, the cry against "unequal taxes" was the leading slogan.

Owing to this circumstance the rich property-holders of Schenectady are so greatly exercised that, unconsciously, they are letting cat after cat out of the bag. With equal unconsciousness the *Post* reports its reporter's findings. They are in a nutshell as follows:—

The General Electric works, called, for short, the "G.E." in Schenectady, owns 275 acres of land, about 60 of which are occupied with shops and buildings. It employs more than 16,000 men and women. As a consequence the concern "has brought a lot of business into town"; furthermore, "it has made real estate in hitherto deserted districts valuable; in short, it "made" Schenectady. The capital stock of the concern is valued at \$80,000,000, nevertheless "on the tax assessors' books its property is assessed at \$4,500,000," an amount, which "it is safe to say is less than 25 per cent. of its true value." This, bad enough, as it should seem, is not yet all, nor the worst of it.

According to the *Post's* reporter, "everybody agrees that the Company ought to be paying more, but"—now, mark the "but"—"but when it comes to a question of leaving well enough alone or losing the Company entirely, Schenectady says leave well enough alone by all means." And the reporter proceeds to explain that in the event of an "attempt to meddle with the G.E.'s assessment" what would happen is

that “the General Electric Company would pack up and move away to some other town that is pinning for a nice big factory and does not much care how small taxes it pays.”

Here is in condensed form a picture of capitalist society. Its “square deal”; the “individuality” that it breeds; the “equality before the law” that it practices the “civic virtues” that it fosters; the “brotherhood of Capital and Labor” that it exemplifies;—all that, and all that thereby hangs, clearly drawn and painted by itself.

On that canvas is seen the Capitalist Class in its two subdivisions of Top-Capitalist, and Minor Capitalists,—the latter in the role of parasites upon the former; as “business men” and “real estate holders,” veritable Lazars, feeding on the crumbs that fall from the former’s table; and, as veritable menials, accepting the kicks and condoning the acts of usurpation upon themselves and all others that the former chooses to exercise;—the former, as over-lord, holding over the latter the club of ruination of “business” and scuttling of “real estate prices” if its sway is threatened by them in their monkeyings with reform.

On that canvas is seen the Working Class relegated to the place that capitalist society has de facto for it, all talk about “brotherhood” notwithstanding. The 16,000 men and women employes—they, the real producers with their brain and brawn of the Top-capitalist’s wealth; they, the source of the Minor Capitalists’ affluence; they, the real “makers” of Schenectady; are ignored, nay, worse, they are considered as only part of the inventory, or assets, of Top and Minor Capitalists combined.

The picture presented by Schenectady is the picture of Capitalist Society in the United States. That self-drawn picture preaches the doom of the capitalist social order—marks the same “Impossible”—points unerringly to the magazines of social dynamite accumulated and still accumulating in its own vaults, and bound to blow it up.

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