

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 13, NO. 102.

NEW YORK, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10, 1912.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

MOLDERS MOLDED.

By DANIEL DE LEON

JAMES M. BECK, representing the American Publishers' Association, pronounces unconstitutional the provision of the Federal Law of last August 24, 1912, which requires newspapers and other periodicals to make twice a year sworn reports of a number of things, including their "net paid circulation," and their bond-holders.

We do not wonder at the frantic objections "unconstitutional" is the mildest—that the newspapers are hurling at the new law.

Imagine a sworn statement of their circulations made by papers whose advertising income is banked upon a fabulous and fabled circulation! Imagine the bondholders of a paper being known, and thereby an insight afforded upon the paper's posture on matters of importance! Why, the bottom would be taken from under many a perfervid editorial regarding "the people's will" on this or that subject. Until now, only Socialists tried to ascertain a paper's ownership, and only Socialists awaited information upon that head in order to know who "the people" were whose views a paper was announcing. Under the present law, the man on the street would know the secret.

We do not wonder, in view of all this, why most papers are indignant, and why their love-and-affection for the Constitution is outraged. At the same time, making all the allowance that is due to the effect of sudden jolts, we must express our astonishment at the indiscretion of the howl—at this season of the year.

"Publicity" is almost everywhere being advocated as a panacea for the numerous ills that our people are complaining of. "Publicity" of campaign funds—"publicity" of the percentage of alcohol in patent medicines—"publicity" of the compounds



JAMES MONTGOMERY BECK
(1861-1936)

of canned goods—“publicity” of profits by corporations, Loudest in the advocacy of the “publicity” panacea, strange to say, were some of those of our metropolitan newspapers who are now yelling, “Unconstitutional!” at the self-same “Publicity” when applied to themselves.

Have our “molders of public opinion” no sense of pride? Have they forgotten that they “molded public opinion” to the point that public opinion has fled for asylum to Publicity? If they have not forgotten the fact, are their present yells a case of being “hoisted by one’s own petard,” or of Sartor being Resartus?¹

It does look as if our Molders had been Molded.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded March 2014

slpns@slp.org

¹ [A reference to Thomas Carlyle’s novel, *Sartor Resartus*.]