

EDITORIAL

## AN OPEN LETTER TO N. BEHAR.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**T**O N. Behar,  
New York City.  
Dear Sir:—

Seeing we consider you a serious and honest man, and that honest and serious men do not err willingly, we address you once more, this time in reply to your favor of the 3d instant wherewith you answered our Open Letter of last September 26.

You ask, admitting the motive of the Sulzer bill {to} be to put more money into the pockets of the capitalist shipowners, “Is it not better to put money in the pockets of our own, rather than in the pockets of foreign shipowners?”

Our answer is—”Unqualifiedly no, not to the working class: to them it is all one, as things are to-day.”

Your error proceeds from the economic premises that the more money the capitalist has in his pocket, all the more will the workingman get. The premises are false.

The amount of money that finds its way into the workingman’s pockets is regulated by the price of labor-power in the labor market. The price of labor-power does not depend upon the wealth of the purchaser, the capitalist, anymore than the price of potatoes depends upon the amount of money in the marketer’s pocket. As the price of potatoes depends upon the supply of and the demand for potatoes, so does the price of labor-power, that is, the worker’s wage, depend upon the supply of and the demand for him in the labor market. Despite the growth and spread of industry, which consumes more actual labor-power, the supply increases steadily in the labor-market, due to the ever more perfect, or labor-eliminating, machinery of production.

This fundamental principle in economics establishes more than the non-correlation of the amount of money in the capitalist's, and the amount in the

worker's pockets. It establishes the fact of a proportion, in the opposite direction.

It being an economic fact that the wages of the workers depend upon the supply and demand in the labor-market; it being a further economic fact that the more improved the machinery of production becomes, all the larger becomes the supply of labor-power; it being an equally undeniable fact that the capitalist sets up his plants, and causes the same to be operated and improved, not for the charitable purpose of enriching his hands, but for the personal purpose of enriching himself;—the conclusion is that the richer the capitalist all the more exploited are the workers, and all {the} more dependent and wretched their plight.

Thus you will realize that the ship-owning capitalist's claim of "furnishing work to thousands of our workmen," in the event of the Sulzer bill's passing, is not, as you believe, a bona fide claim, at all. It is merely false pretense, intended to rope in the workers' support for a measure whose first, last and only purpose is to put, as we said in our first letter to you, "more money in the pockets of the capitalist shipowners."

Respectfully submitting for your consideration the above principles of political economy, and the conclusions that flow therefrom, we remain

Sincerely yours,

EDITOR DAILY PEOPLE.

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