

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 13, NO. 90.

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 1912.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

PRESS OWNERSHIP.

By DANIEL DE LEON

E LOQUENTLY does Frank A. Munsey address the Socialist Movement of the land on the subject of the ownership of the press—although the addresser never once mentions the word “Socialism.”

In giving his reasons for buying the New York *Press* Mr. Munsey says he wanted a morning newspaper to advocate the cause of the Bullmoose party.

A privately owned paper is like a feudal manor. As the feudal owner owned, not the manor only, but also the live (human) stock, on it so does in capitalism the private individual, or corporation, own, not the paper only, but its readers also.

As in feudalism, the transfer of the manor by the conquered to the conquering lord transferred the “live” stock along with the manor, so is, under capitalism, the transfer of a privately owned paper expected to transfer the “live”-stock, that browsed on the paper, from the conquered, or bought out, to the conquering or buying capitalist lord.

As in feudalism, where the importance attached to a manor by a feudal lord depended greatly upon the “live”-stock that was chained to the glebe, so, under capitalism, the importance of a privately-owned newspaper greatly depends upon the number of reader-cattle that the paper has trained to come every morning or evening to drink at the trough of its columns.

It is the part of a Socialist Movement to train readers that are not browsing or watering cattle—a part of the inventory of the paper, transferable, or expected to be transferable, with the paper’s transfer.

Habitual or exclusive readers of privately owned papers are chattel; the chattel of the paper’s owner, a chattel upon which he traffics.

The readers of a party-owned paper are men who carry their sovereignty under their own hats. No exploiter of humanity would purchase such a paper; he could not,

if he would; he would not be fool enough to try, if he could; he would be making an empty purchase.

In purchasing the New York *Press*, and stating why, Frank A. Munsey affords the Socialist Movement of the land the opportunity for a liberal education upon, that warns it against, a press that the Party does not own, absolutely and unqualifiedly.

Frank A. Munsey's lesson may be summed up in the motto: "A Movement that flies Socialist colors must own its own press, or the press will own—and sell it out," as is happening to the Socialist party.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded December 2013

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