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EDITORIAL

ON THE BREACH FOR “THE PUBLIC.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

TWO hundred and fifty retail tobacco dealers of this city assembled a few days ago to “take energetic and aggressive measures” against the Tobacco Trust.

The Tobacco Trust, officially known as the American Tobacco Company, has been concentrating the tobacco industry under one hat. It began by practically putting out of business the tobacco jobbers by organizing a subsidiary department, the Metropolitan Tobacco Company. The Trust now has taken the field against the retailer, including, of course, those who manufacture cigars in the rear of their shops. This new department of the Trust is named the United Cigar Stores Company. Able to sell cheaper, as it receives its goods at cut prices; able, therefore, to set up large-windowed and attractive shops, and draw customers with more alluring prizes, the new departure has speedily had its effect upon the small dealers, whom to sweep out of the way is its purpose. As the Metropolitan Tobacco Company caused a howl to go up from the crowded-out jobbers, together with the large retinue of bookkeepers and other employees rendered superfluous, so now the United Cigar Stores Company is raising a howl on the part of the small dealers.

Chickens are referred to as the types of brainless forgetfulness. A second after they are shooed away, they return totally oblivious of previous experience. Not otherwise are the middle class folks whom the Juggernaut march of capitalism crumples under foot. And the small tobacco dealers, now arrayed and arraying themselves with their puny bow-and-arrow commercial weapons of a day gone by, against the up-to-date commercial Gatling guns of capitalism wielded by the Tobacco Trust, are certainly a type of that class. Have they learned from the experience of their fellow middle class men in so many other industries, who have likewise been smoked out by concentrated capitalism? Have they learned that their attempts to keep their heads above water are

wild sputterings of drowning men? Have they raised themselves above the narrow horizon of their petty out-of-date class interests, enlarged their minds, realized that their Cause, as a class, is not worth fighting for, while their Cause as human beings IS and thereby places them in the ranks of the Working Class? Have they, finally, caught the light of Socialism, thereby chastened their methods, and raised the banner of defiance against the capitalist system, to overthrow it at the hustings and help rear the Socialist Republic? Not in the slightest! Their every utterance betrays the reverse. Accordingly, in language that reminds one of Gov. Wait, of Colorado, they too now talk of "an aggressive campaign," and they too are addressing themselves to the task of "fighting the Trust," they too pronounce themselves the special guardians of "The Public."

The roar that certainly goes up from the throats of the Capitalist Class, when in their luxuriously equipped club rooms they hear the duet sung by the sinking middle class and the pure and simple Trades Unions—the former to the effect that they can "conquer" the Trusts, the latter to the effect that they can establish "harmonious relations" with the Trust—that loud roar that goes up from the capitalist throats is a fact by which to gauge the enormousness of the task before the militant Socialists of the land,—and to spur them to grapple therewith.

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