

EDITORIAL

WHO ARE THE “WE’S”?

By DANIEL DE LEON

“**W**E” in the social and economic parlance of the ruling class is a cloak of marvelous elastic power. One moment it is stretched out to envelop capitalist and workers; the next moment it shrinks into such small size that it just covers the capitalist only.

For instance:—

One moment the story is heard: “We, the people of the United States, own the largest patrimony of any people on earth; our wealth is measureless”; the next moment, when an element representing the largest factor of “We, the people,” to wit, the Working Class, proposes to levy a tax upon the “patrimony,” the very folks who had just stated the patrimony belonged to “we,” the people, growl and snarl at “the bunch of paupers who have no property, hence pay no taxes, hence, would confiscate the patrimony that we own.”

One moment the claim is set up: “We are a wealthy people; look at the per capita of our wealth; there is nearly 2,000 apiece for each of us”; the next moment the tune changes to: “John Jacob Astor left an estate worth \$150,000,000.”

Obviously the Cause of the Working Class summons Socialism to put an end to the double sense in which “We” is used. The summons is left unheard by the Socialist party. The S.P. does worse: it echoes, it imitates the capitalist dealers with “We” in a double sense.

Again, for instance:—

The fifth Plank, already touched upon in these columns, of the “measures calculated to strengthen the working class in its fight for the realization of its ultimate aim” demands “the appropriation by taxation of the annual rental value of land held for speculation.”

Appropriation by whom? Of course the implication is “by We,” and the “We” is

here meant to embrace the whole people. Does it? Upon inquiry the “We” will be found to shrink, from the ample dimensions of a cloak that covers the whole people, to the tight-fitting vestment that takes in only the expressly capitalist portion of the property-holding class.

The appropriation of rental values by taxation is appropriation by, through and for the capitalist class. Not a copper of the appropriated values drops into the pockets of the proletariat. The rent, paid before by the proletarian element of the order “We,” will have to be paid afterward by them.

Whether on S.P. lips or on the lips of avowedly capitalist papers, “We” is a deception. The Working Class is included only when the role of food for cannon is assigned to them. When the role of fruition is in turn, then “We” includes all but the Workers.

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