

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 5, NO. 340.

NEW YORK, MONDAY, JUNE 5, 1905.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

THE EQUITABLE FIGHT.

By DANIEL DE LEON

IN the development of Capitalism, the process of competitive extermination is not confined to the little capitalists alone, but extends to the big ones as well. The destruction of individual capital is followed by a war of concentrated capital upon concentrated capital, as in the case of the Metropolitan and the Interborough railway systems in New York City, for instance. And the more this war proceeds, the greater becomes the necessity for concentrated capital to buttress itself with further concentrations on all sides, for, owing to the magnitude of the capital involved, the greater is the loss and, vice versa, the gains involved—where defeat or victory abideth in the struggle. In this fact, and not in their individual greed, lies the secret of the endeavor of the big capitalists to further extend their possessions, and gather about them all the forces of modern society that make for security and strength. It is in this connection that the banks and the insurance companies play the most vital part. The repositories of private and public funds—the heart, as it were, of the capitalist system, receiving from and pumping into industry, the wealth and capital necessary to its sustenance—their domination and control is an unavoidable necessity to the big capitalists; for, with them, success is assured; without them, failure is inevitable.

During the past few months, and especially the past few weeks, American society has been profoundly stirred by the disclosures regarding the management of the half-billion dollar Equitable Life Assurance Society, with its eighty millions of surplus. To the superficial, these disclosures have no more significance than the many efforts, undertaken from time to time, to purge similar organizations of internal evils. But to the close student of capitalist society, the evidence is daily increasing that the disclosures are simply additions to the long list of incidents composing the history of the big capitalists' fight for supremacy and control—for the

preservation and perpetuation of their own peculiar group interests. The charges of laxness and extravagance, of extortionate salaries and illegal practices, brought against the management, sink into insignificance alongside of the stock-jobbing operations of the financial clique dominating the society, and the tremendous possibilities for evil, which these contain, to capitalists not included in it. To have the resources of such a society arrayed for, instead of against one, is a matter of such obvious significance that any dilation thereon is superfluous. Hence, the spectacle of powerful and eminent financiers—the alleged embodiments of human wisdom and virtue—indulging in a series of meetings, whose factional fights would put a bear garden to shame, is not inexplicable to such a student. It is plainly but another exhibition of the diverse qualities—mainly base ones—that takes place whenever a question of material interests is at stake—but another demonstration of the conflict of interests, which is the basis of modern society.

Whatever may be the outcome of the Equitable fight—whether the present faction retains control, or its power is wrested away by its opponents—whether the business of the Equitable is diverted to rival companies, and it is compelled to wind up its affairs—is immaterial, as far as the conflict of interests under Capitalism is concerned. These will continue to appear in other insurance companies; for the latter will, more in the future than in the past, be the promoters, controllers and owners of capitalist stocks and bonds—the agencies for capitalist failure and success; consequently, their domination will be more essential in the future than at present, and more bitterly fought for. And so also may it be said that no matter what the outcome of the Equitable fight, the final result of the conflict of which it is a manifestation will be of vast social benefit. True, the conflicts of the big capitalists for the control of fiduciary and other funds have a perturbing influence, and make manifest the danger of placing large accumulations of wealth in the hands of a few to the detriment of the many. But these conflicts are, relatively speaking, reducing the number of heads of capitalist society, thus making it easier for mankind to decapitate the monster—to “expropriate the expropriators”—when the time is ripe for it. The monarchy, with its king and nobles, concentrated political power, and thus made itself the easy target of political democracy. The conflict of capitalist interest{s} is creating plutocracy, with its Rockefeller and financiers. The plutocracy

is concentrating economic power and making itself the easy target of industrial democracy.

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

Uploaded January 2008

slpns@slp.org