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EDITORIAL

THAT MYSTIC PUBLIC.

By DANIEL DE LEON

SCIENCE may have made great progress. For all that, the domain of the mystic stubbornly holds many an old fastness. How stubbornly may be judged from the ever recurring mysticism concerning “The Public.” There have been elves, and feys and fairies, trolls and pixies, goblins and sprites. They have all been laid. They proved too weak for the fact-broom of science. But there is one spook that, at least so far, has defied the progress of science. It is the spook of “The Public.” It ever bobs up serenely. It is bobbing up again. The Civic Federation has appointed a commission “representing the interests of Capital, Labor and the Public” to investigate—well, it does not matter what. It is enough to know that the investigators are “Capital,” “Labor” and “The Public.”

To the unmystified mind such a subdivision sounds very much like subdividing mankind into “males, females and children.” If “interests” are to be subdivided into “Capital,” “Labor” and “The Public” it must follow that each of these is distinct, and excludes the other two.

The interests of “Capital” are clear—it is the interests of the class that toil not, neither do they spin, and yet, like the lilies in the field, even Solomon in all his glory is not arrayed like one of them.

Also clear are the interests of “Labor”—it is the interests of the class that toils and spins, but yet, like the overdriven beasts of burden, not Lazarus in all his wretchedness is afflicted like one of them.

But how about “The Public”? Of whom is that made? It can contain neither capitalist idlers nor proletarian toilers. It can not contain them because the Civic Federation subdivision excludes them. Seeing “The Public” contains neither capitalists nor proletarians, who is there left to fill up the ranks of The Public, what can the nature of its “interests” be, and what may be the look of the mug of its

representative?

Fact is there is no such thing as a distinct category “The Public.” Fact is the thing is a sprite from the land of Myth, with this difference that all other denizens of Mythland are poetic conceptions, whereas “The Public” is a conception exactly the reverse of poetic. It is a conception born of Fraud, run by Fraud, and operated for Fraud’s sake. It is a conception intended to confuse the social facts. It is a sort of stacking of cards—just the kind of trick that one may expect to see tried by the collection of social beauty-spots—Brothers Capital and Brothers Labor—a photograph of whom is published by the late issue of the *Civic Federationist Review*, feasting at their recent banquet.

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

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