

# DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 1, NO. 225.

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 1901.

TWO CENTS.

EDITORIAL

## THE COST OF GOVERNMENT.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**I**T is a feature of Capitalism that government necessarily becomes more and more costly to its owners—that is, the capitalist class—as the years and the decades roll on.

In 1861, with a population of 31,000,000, the total expenditure of our national government, including the interest on a public debt of ninety million dollars, was less than \$67,000,000.

In 1881, the population was 50,000,000, and the expenditure, including the interest on a debt of over two billion dollars, was \$260,000,000.

This year the population is close upon 80,000,000, the interest-bearing debt has been reduced to about one billion, but the expenditure already in sight, according to the appropriation bills passed or to be passed by Congress in its present session, is to be about \$800,000,000.

In other words, if we should use the vicious and bamboozling per capita mode of comparison which is in vogue among capitalist statisticians, we would find that the national expenditure, per head of population, was about two dollars in 1861, five dollars in 1881, and ten dollars in 1901. Moreover, in multiplying these figures by five, we would find the so-called “average cost” of our national government “per family,” as follows: ten dollars in 1861, twenty-five dollars in 1881, and fifty dollars in 1901.

During the same periods the cost of State and municipal governments has also vastly increased. The budget of Greater New York this year is very nearly one hundred million dollars; a figure which, treated in accordance with the same confusing per capita mode of averaging, would make it appear that each family residing in the American metropolis is now contributing \$140 to the municipal and State budgets, besides \$50 to the national expenditure, or \$190 in the aggregate, out of its own earnings or income.

It falls under the sense that such a statement, as regards the wage-workers, is

absurd. Its object is to befool them into a belief that their condition would be better if the cost of capitalist government were less, and that they must consequently take sides in the dispute constantly raging between their exploiters concerning the extent and the mode of taxation; whereas their condition, under any fiscal system that we may conceive, can only be affected by the competition between them, supplemented or super-induced by the competition of the machine with human labor.

Of course, every cent that is spent in any way by any person, association or government, represents a value produced by labor. So is, for instance, a “grand party” given by the **Bradley-Martins**. But it does not follow that the workers whose labor has produced the wealth of all such gentry would get one cent more in payment for their exertions if there were no such displays among “the 400.” The “savings” of the latter would simply be increased to the extent of their “abstinence.”

Let this, therefore, be well understood; and let it be well kept in mind for use when an attempt is made to sidetrack the laboring class upon a taxation issue. It is not from the wages paid out to the workers, but from the wealth produced by them over and above their wages and withheld—that is, **STOLEN**—from them by the capitalist class, that this class pays the taxes as well as its butcher’s bill and its violins.

Not the cost of capitalist government, but the existence of capitalism itself, is the issue between the exploited and the exploiter. And there is only one party that keeps this issue unclouded, forcing it more and more to the front as by its efforts the class-consciousness of the exploited millions is being awakened. No middle-class cobwebs obscure the vision of the fighting S.L.P.

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

Uploaded January 2006