

EDITORIAL

THE “RAKE-OFF” AND “SHAKE-DOWN” CONTINUE “WIDE OPEN.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

“**F**OR the city’s sake, for democracy’s sake”—such was the language with which Mayor Low closed his first message to the Board of Aldermen, a message that was at the same time a manifesto to the people, asking them to co-operate with him so as “to abolish the iniquitous system, in all its forms” of “shake-down” and “rake-off” by promptly reporting to him any wrong going on. From the smoke, soot and grime of “The Black Hole of Calcutta,” named the “New York Central Tunnel,” the shades of seventeen human beings, suddenly disemboweled, rise, “reporting” to him in accents not to be mistaken; and from numerous hospitals and other abodes of suffering as many more beings, not quite disemboweled but sorely injured, joined their voices to the killed. If ever the “model Mayor” received a “report,” it is now. And what is his answer? It is the identical answer of the “shake-down” and “rake-off” Tammany Mayor, made eleven years ago when a similar accident occurred: “I don’t see there is anything the Mayor can do.”!!!

It is not quite one year ago that the Grand Jury made a presentment showing the tunnel to be a pest-hole. From the state of things there described it appeared clearly that the tunnel was kept in a condition in which accidents, such as the one that occurred on the 8th, were invited; that the nuisance could be abated; that since the accident of February, 1891, the tunnel’s atmospheric condition, which had caused the accident of that year, had grown worse; and that the New York Central Railroad was criminally negligent. The power of the Mayor is ample in the premises; ampler yet is the power of the administration that went into office this New Year. And yet Mayor Low does not see there is anything he can do!

Let the innocents who imagined there was to be a genuine change feel

surprised. Let them learn the lesson. The Rights of Man, the Sanctity of Life can not be safe-guarded by a class whose class interests rest upon a denial of the Rights of Man, upon a denial of the Sanctity of Life. Capitalism is a Moloch. The fumes of human gore—spilt from workingmen’s veins on the “peaceful” battle fields of the shops and mills, and on the “un-peaceful” battle fields, such as the Capitalist class drives the workers to in the Philippine Islands—choke its nostrils. Tammany was wholly Democratic. Lowism is Republican and Democratic fused. The practical indifference of both to the Sanctity of Life demonstrates the folly of trusting to either. The Rights of Man, the Sanctity of Life, can never be safe until that crowning victory of the race—the Socialist Republic—shall be an accomplished fact. Saddening is the consideration that a fact so plain needs such hecatombs as these tunnel accidents to bring it home to the masses.

**Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded August 2006**