

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 5, NO. 187.

NEW YORK, TUESDAY, JANUARY 3, 1905.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

A “PUBLIC” BUILDING.

By DANIEL DE LEON

OPPPOSITE the Daily People Building a monumental structure raises its proud marble-and-granite many-story front. The building is just finished and is about to be occupied. It is a public building. The common designation of “public” conveys the idea of something for common use. If this “public building” is a little more closely looked at, it will be found to be a monumental ocular demonstration of the class nature of modern society, of the fact that the government is of and for the property-holding class, of the fact that the propertiless, or working class does not count—in fact, the very circumstance that that particular structure is called a “public” building accentuates the fact that under capitalism the working class counts so little that it is not even considered a part of the public.



NEW YORK HALL OF RECORDS
(now Surrogate Court)

Prisons, legislative halls, State Houses, Federal White Houses and Capitols—all these and similar structures need very thorough probing in order to reveal the fact of their class character. It requires a pretty thorough knowledge of social science to penetrate the false mask of “public” that such structures put on. It requires nothing more than average common sense to penetrate the mask in the instance of the building in question.

The building in question is called the Hall of Records. What records? Let the disposition of the several rooms, as just published, answer the question.

“Rooms 1 to 8 inclusive in the basement and the first floor are for the use of the

Department of Taxes and Assessments".—The working class has no property to assess; it has no property on which to pay taxes. While taxes are wealth, and all wealth is produced by the working class, and, consequently, taxes are paid out of the product of Labor's toil, nevertheless, the taxes are paid out of that part of the product of Labor that Labor is plundered of in the shop. Taxes are paid out of the plunder that the capitalist has levied upon the working class. They are paid by the capitalist class.

"Second and third floors and rooms 3, 4, 5, 6 and the southerly portion of room 7 on the fourth floor for the use and purposes of the Register".—In the Register's office the real estate transactions are entered, both purchase and sale, and also mortgages on land and chattels. The working class has no money to buy land, no land to sell, consequently no real estate mortgages to raise or take, and as to its chattels they are not valuable enough for registry in the Register's office: the workingman's chattels, when mortgaged, are registered in dingy pawnbrokers' shops. Those are the Register Offices of the Working Class.

"Room 1, 2, 8, 9 and the northerly portion of room 7 on the fourth floor, and the fifth floor for the use and purposes of the Surrogate's chambers".—The Surrogate concerns himself with property left by the dead. The workingman's estate never goes through the Surrogate's chambers. The Surrogate, Judge and his pursuivants would not wipe their feet upon that.

In short, for whom is the Hall of Records? For the capitalist class. Who is the "public" for whose benefit the costly building has been raised? The capitalist class. The working class is simply not "in it".

Such, if carefully examined, is the nature of all the "public buildings" of capitalist government.

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

Uploaded October 2007

slpns@slp.org