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EDITORIAL

SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OR ASH-BARREL.

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THE enthusiasm suddenly developed in favor of municipal ownership on the part of the ferry-boat lines between lower New York and Brooklyn is a development that marks the spot where the road forks—one fork leading to the Socialist Republic, another to Ash-Barrelonia.

What with the bridges that now span the East River and the several more that are in contemplation, and what with the contemplated tunnels under the River, the one-time prime dukedom or marquisate of the Brooklyn ferries has dwindled into a trifle, compared to what it once was, and threatens to sink into a burden on the hands of its owners. Dividends that once ran high, now have taken a plunge, and it looks as if they may be substantially if not wholly wiped out. The very thought of the popular ownership of these ferry-lines one time threw their owners into hysterics of “patriotism”, “law and order” and what not. The holding capitalists pooohed the notion of such enterprises being handled by the people; the scheme was pronounced subversive of “individuality”. Those were the days when the concerns yielded magnificent dividends—dividends that were predicated upon a monopoly and upon starvation wages paid to the employees, from the pilots down to the deck-hands. The times have changed. As stated above, other concerns have blanketed the sails of the owners of these ferry-boats. In a way, the one-time ferry-line owner is thrown along side of the wage-slave. As the improved mechanical contrivance displaces the latter by throwing him out of work, the identical process displaces the former by throwing him “out of business.” The capitalist, thus thrown out of business, finds himself, together with the wage-slave who is thrown out of work, at the spot where the road forks—one fork leads to the Socialist Republic the other to Ash-Barrelonia. Which to choose?

The class-conscious workingman is aided by the badge of his class—bare

hands—in making the right choice. It is all one to him whether dividends are squeezed out of his flesh by a private employer direct, or whether they are squeezed out of his flesh by the method proposed by the Wisconsin Social Democratic party, which proposes to buy out the capitalist and pay him with bonds. The interest that the capitalist will derive from his bonds indicates a wage-slave class operating the plants that yield the interest. The class-conscious workingman will, accordingly, set his steps flat-footedly upon the road that leads to the Socialist Republic, where HIS class shall resume possession of what is justly its own, it alone having produced it, and then enjoy the full fruits of his labor as a free man.

The ash-barreled capitalist, however, the capitalist whom superior capitalist contrivances have left with worthless stuff on his hands, feels his way barred to the road that leads to the Socialist Republic. What bars it is his class interest. And his class interest is determined by the ownership of property whereby he can fleece the proletarian. There is but one road open to him, and that one he enters with enthusiasm, and hoodwinks all the un-class-conscious workers that he can reach to whoop it up for him—the road in which he can get his capitalist Government to buy his worthless stuff off his hands and secure him a revenue besides. And he will be so enthusiastic over it that, despite his previous horror of Socialism, he will seek to promote his move by availing himself of the increasing popularity of Socialism. He will put on the mask of Socialism to conceal his ash-barrel purpose.

The Socialist Republic is no ash-barrel. Its mission is not to be the refuse-heap of capitalism, nor the subterranean system of capitalist exploitation. The Socialist Republic will be equipped, not with the cast-off clothing of the capitalist system, but with its choicest raiment; and, owning this, unmortgaged by any bonds or other tentacles by which the capitalist class sucks the workers' substance, the Socialist Republic will guarantee to all the full enjoyment of their product.

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