

# The People.

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THIRD EDITORIAL

## An Important Omission.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**A**ll the metropolitan papers announce that the Manhattan Elevated Road Co. has decided to introduce electric motors in place of steam engines; and columns upon columns of interviews are published with the several Directors, from George Gould down, upon the “advantages to the public” in this change:—less noise, less smoke, greater rapidity of travel, more cars, less shaking up, etc., etc. One thing that will be less, too, is however, omitted, carefully omitted, not hinted at even with a whisper, to wit, less employees.

No capitalist concern ever yet made any improvement in its plant for the convenience of the public. The epigram: “The public be damned” was not an angry sally of Vanderbilt’s; it expresses a deep, fundamental capitalist principle: “We are not a philanthropic establishment, but are here for business” is but the mild form for the Vanderbiltan epigram. All the newspaper gushing, or rather the Directors’ gushing through the newspapers, concerning the “advantages to the dear public” is a mere cloak to conceal what they really mean; and what they really mean in this case is that they will make so much more money by the displacement of the numerous hands made possible by electric motors.

First a large number of “ticket-choppers” was displaced by the “automatic gateman”; now, firemen and many others are to be sent packing when the electric motor is in operation. Thus improved machinery is doing its work. Hands are thrown out; pay-rolls are reduced; and profits jump up.

The old “ticket-choppers” and the hands now to be thrown out may now have some leisure to weigh the Socialist arguments that they have been scoffing at; to ascertain what good protection and gold has done them; why these could do them no earthly good; why, therefore, neither free trade nor silver could have improved their condition. They may have leisure to comprehend the fact that the ownership of the tool of production by mankind is a necessity to the worker’s happiness. And, possibly, hunger’s fell tooth may gnaw them into a sense of the absurdity of all the inventions and conquests of

science going to such a parasite brood as the capitalist class, and serve only as a scourge to those who have worked and do work. These reflections may kindle in them the spark of manhood, so long kept cold by false economic notions; and they may hasten to wheel in line with those of their fellow men, who, under the banner of the Socialist Labor party, are marching to the conquest of the public powers, and, thereby, of the machinery of production.

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

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