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EDITORIAL

ONE MORE RIP.

By DANIEL DE LEON

IT is quite evident that the Republican and Democratic papers, who have given publicity and sympathetically commented on the disclosures made by Profs. Woodberry and MacDowell in their explanations for resigning from Columbia University, little realize that they are owlshly crooning over what, in fact, is one more rip in their own dearly beloved ripping structure of private ownership in that which the people need for the keeping and enjoying of life; and that they little realize how the Woodberry-MacDowell explosion, plus, of course, the sympathetic comments of these papers, turns the light of condemnation upon the private ownership of the sources of public information, exercised by these privately owned publishing corporations themselves.

In its salutatory, the *Daily People* said on the morning of Sunday, July 1, 1900:

“The past long dominates the mind of the present. Despite the striking character of modern industrial enterprises, the mind is still dominated by their character of old, when, in their smallness and large numbers, they were private at all points. Having been private concerns then, their modern mammoth, monopolistic supplanters continue to be looked upon as private. Due to this ‘vis inertiae’ of the mind, the pregnant fact that mammoth concerns of to-day are seen the sole purveyors of food, transportation, light, heat, clothing, etc., frequently even of enjoyments, generally escapes due appreciation. Old habits of thought, acquired under immature economic conditions, blind the mind to an appreciation of the pregnant fact that modern industries now work for the public, that they employ the public, that the public depends upon them; in short, that the character of industry stands transformed:—once a private affair, it has developed into a public ministry.

“That an industry which supplies the community with ice is a public ministry may escape the superficial observer. But it cannot escape even the sluggish eye of the most superficial that the industry which supplies the community with information is radically different from a private affair. The newspaper industry, accordingly, brings out in clearest light the point of

development reached. As with the industries that supply the community with the material needs of life, those that supply it with food for the mind have reached that point where virtual monopoly exists:—the capital needed to operate them is not within reach of the masses. Their functions have become public and, therefore, sacred; yet the means to operate them have remained private, and therefore, left them subject to private whim, caprice and interests.”

What is said above about the private corporations that furnish the public with information, holds, of course, with regard to institutions of learning—in some respects even more so. Of course Profs. Woodberry and MacDowell are right in their concrete charges, and of course the press’ sympathy with them is right. But what is the case of Columbia University but merely an aggravation of an organic evil, an evil that is structural in capitalist society? Profs. Woodberry and MacDowell might have said a good deal more than they did. That they did not, shows how little they understand the source of the ills they complain of.

As a factory is not run “for the health” of its owners, as a newspaper is not operated “for the fun” it affords its stockholders, neither is a privately owned “institution of learning” conducted for “patriotism.” They are all run for the profit of their owners. Do not Profs. Woodberry and MacDowell know that recently one of the Columbia University professors—Monroe Smith—issued a circular call for money for the University addressed to millionaires, and there held language which amounts to this: “Share with us your wealth; it is a good investment; you need the blockheads whom we cultivate; if we do not addle the brains of these youths where would you be? shell out!—do not Profs. Woodberry and MacDowell know that?

The monstrosity of private corporations of learning, just now exemplified by Columbia University, throws a clearer light upon that other and kindred monstrosity—the privately owned newspapers, the vehicles of daily public information; and the combined light of the two brings out the fundamental monstrosity on which they are both grafts, the private ownership of the needed land on {and} the needed capital with which to produce the necessaries of life.

Privately owned Columbia University is no worse and no better than her sister monopolies—all of whom, newspapers and factories, are run to suit the private and to the nation disastrous whims, caprices and INTERESTS of their owners.

Thus the Woodberry-MacDowell explosion is but one more rip in the ripping structure of capitalist society.

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