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EDITORIAL

## **KNOCKED OUT EACH OTHER.**

By DANIEL DE LEON

**“T**HE Case for and Against Municipal Ownership” was the subject of discussion at the joint session held on December 28 by the American Political Science Association, at Johns Hopkins University.

Frederic C. Howe, of Cleveland, O., spoke for. The gist of his argument was that there is a widespread popular “dissatisfaction with private monopoly”; municipal corruption springs from franchise grants; municipal ownership would remove this source of corruption.

Prof. Winthrop M. Daniels of Princeton University, spoke against. The gist of the Professor’s argument was that “if the corruption of city politics is inevitably bound up in the local government’s grant of franchises, a betrayal of the public interest is equally possible” whenever that same government administers an industry.

Obviously, Mr. Howe knocked out the Professor beforehand, and the Professor, in turn, neatly knocked out Mr. Howe. The power to grant franchises for monopolies and the exercise of such a power cannot choose but invite corruption. Municipal corruption follows inevitably. Mr. Howe pointed successfully to a leak in the capitalist tub. By doing so Mr. Howe sent the Professor sprawling out of the rink, in advance. The Professor, thereupon, made it quite clear that the government which can and does succumb to corruption in the granting of monopolies is surely not likely to resist corruption in the administration of the same monopolies—an argument that in turn sent Mr. Howe sprawling at the opposite side of the rink. While these two mutually knocked out “scientists” are recovering their breaths from their mutually unerring punches, the Socialist will step into the arena and state the issue. This can now be done all the easier with the two scientists’ knock-outs to help.

“Corruption” is the sociologic expression for the everyday expression of the everyday experience of the capers a man cuts when the ground is slippery under him. On slippery ground man wobbles, trips and falls. Whether it is a banana peel that renders the footing slippery, or it is insecure living, the result is the same. Capitalist society is a banana peel under man’s foot. In the capitalist system the necessities for production and life are private property. The consequence is that he who has no capital is at the mercy of him who has, and he who has some, but smaller, capital is in constant dread of being confiscated. The insecurity of the masses is played upon by the capitalist; on the other hand, the masses being needed by the capitalist, a “compromise” is reached. The compromise represents the swaying backward and forward of the man on slippery ground—in sociology these staggers are called “corruption.”

The attitude of the Howes is to beat the devil around the stump: they would stop, not corruption, but one method of corruption and that in a manner that would intensify corruption in some other direction. The attitude of the Professors Daniels is to fold their arms and let corruption alone: they cannot see how the thing can be stopped: they solve the question by running away from it. The Socialist Labor Party neither runs away from this, any more than from any other question, nor does it beat the devil around the stump. It attacks “corruption” in the only way that the thing can be intelligently done—by straining to remove from under man’s foot the banana peel of the capitalist system.

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

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