

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 11, NO. 13.

NEW YORK, WEDNESDAY, JULY 13, 1910.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

AN OPEN LETTER

**TO EDWIN A. START, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
OF AMERICAN FORESTRY ASSOCIATION,
WASHINGTON, D.C.**

By DANIEL DE LEON

DEAR Sir:—Agreeable to the request, expressed in your circular letter of the 11th of last month, that we give careful attention to the reasons you state for the support of the *Daily People* to the efforts of your Association, we have given close perusal to your communication with the consequence, we regret to say, that we do not see our way clear to comply with your wishes.

That vandalism is rampant in our forests is an undeniable fact. That our forests should be protected is a consummation devoutly to be wished. For all that it does not follow that “the greatest question before the American people to-day is that of the conservation of the natural resources of the country, upon which the life of the nation depends.” If by “the American people” is meant the people of America, of what use are to them natural resources held and, under the existing capitalist order, holdable only by a slim minority, not a few of whom do not make America but the fashionable resorts of Europe their home, and all of whom spend there large lumps of the proceeds of their vandalism?

If, Sir, you would take a broader view of the subject, instead of allowing your horizon to be bounded by the forests, you would see that the forest portion of our national resources is not the only one that is being vandalized by the capitalist class. The natural gas belt, the coal and mineral belts, many a farming region, etc., etc., and, along with these belts and regions, the working class, which the capitalist looks upon as a portion of the land’s “natural opportunities,” are all subject to the same affliction and infliction—they are all mercilessly sacrificed to the class interests of the ruling, or capitalist class.

In view of these facts, the greatest question before the American people to-day is their own conservation—not the conservation of this or that bit of natural resources. The greatest question really before the American people, that is, the working class, which constitutes the bulk of the population, is to so pull themselves together so as to pull themselves out of their present “natural resource” or chattel category. That done, there will be no more vandalism perpetrated upon the actual natural resources. Capitalism, the Vandal of things and human beings, would be no more.

It must be admitted that an emancipated wage slave class has a deep interest in not finding themselves in a desert waste on the day of their emancipation. The fact is that even less effort than the effort required for the working class to snatch the forests, or any other portion of the natural resources, from the clutches of the Vandal capitalist class, would accomplish the workers’ own emancipation. The tactics that would turn the efforts of the proletariat into the channels of forest conservation would leave the proletariat just where they are with the forests still capitalist class property. The tactics that turn the efforts of the proletariat into the channels of their own emancipation would kill two flies with one clap—it would free the people who need freedom and would simultaneously place them in possession of all the natural resources, besides the social means to develop these resources and turn the land into a terrestrial paradise.

To these tactics the *Daily People*, as the organ of the Socialist Labor Party, is unshakably pledged.

Yours very truly,
Editor *Daily People*.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded July 2011

slpns@slp.org