

# DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 10, NO. 68.

NEW YORK, MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 1909.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

## THE CUSTOMS HOLDUP.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**I**F indignation could kill, our incoming elite, now returning from their comfortable summerings abroad, would one and all be murderers, with customs inspectors and detectives as the victims.

Customs frauds extending over years, developing into a system of trunk construction and baggage checking of their own, and perpetrated not by “lawless” workingmen, but by the most ornate pillars of society having been uncovered, a spasm of thorough inspection has affected the officials. In place of their lax easiness of former years they are now ruthlessly performing their duties. This is all something new to our smuggling elite. They term it the “customs holdup.”

Considering these facts, precious little “holdup” is there. But even were it as big as our indignant foiled, detected, or would-be smugglers make it out, what of it?

For nearly a century now there has been going on in the United States a holdup to which it is nothing. That holdup is the holdup of the pay-envelope.

The victims of the pay-envelope holdup are not wealthy and able to spare a little taken from them; they are poor and need everything they have. They are not fleeced out of the luxuries of life, but out of their barest necessities. They are not despoiled of one-twentieth or one-tenth of their goods merely, but of four-fifths of them. They are not a few, but the overwhelming majority. They are not idlers, but the only useful members of society. Every man, woman and child who works for wages, together with his dependents, is subject to it, and it is crushing out their lives.

Why has the pay envelope holdup gone on so long unprotested, while the “customs holdup” has raised a tempest in two months? Because in the latter case the invasion of the levying power is visible and forcible, while in the former it is insidious and concealed. The payment of wages conceals the robbery feature of the

act, and puts the employer rather in the light of a benefactor for the one-fifth he gives than of a despoiler for the four-fifths he withholds. It is the duty of the workingman of to-day to recognize the robbery perpetrated on him in the pay-envelope holdup, and having recognized, organize politically and industrially to end it.

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

Uploaded by Donna Bills, October 2010

[socialists@slp.org](mailto:socialists@slp.org)