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EDITORIAL

## WHY GO TO EUROPE?

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**T**HE latest outcome of the struggle in Philadelphia with the boodle gas aldermen, is the decision of the Committee of Seventy to send its chairman, John C. Winston, to Europe to study “municipal ownership”, and bring back a report how it can best be attained here. Why go so far to ascertain a thing upon which our own country can give full and varied information?

Take, for instance, our Brooklyn Bridge. Whether viewed as a trophy of architecture, of engineering or of sociology, on the municipalization question, the Brooklyn Bridge is monumental. Not all the municipalized franchises of Europe put together can hold a candle to that one monument of American “municipalization”. As to the Glasgow example, it is simply not “in it”.

The Brooklyn Bridge was built by the joint municipalities of New York and Brooklyn. What “municipalization” means under capitalist rule began to be exemplified from the inception of the Bridge. That phase of the matter may be summed up in the name that the Bridge obtained during its protracted construction—Steal. Finally, the structure was ready and put in operation, and immediately thereupon “municipalization” started. The deaths of pneumonia among the Bridge employees was something appalling; wages were low, hours long, on the wind-swept structure. But so far, only the municipalized employees suffered. The “public” was thereupon operated upon. The operation was successful. The cars were made more and more uncomfortable, the trains fewer and more irregular, the crowds became more crushing—until finally the traction capitalist concerns gobbled up the whole thing and now run the affair as they run their private shops. “Municipalization” conducted under the capitalist system, with, of course, the political agencies of Capitalism in charge, made a perfect exhibition of itself—Labor was not (how else could it be?) a whit better off; Capital was (what is there to

prevent it?) decidedly benefited.

But it should not need any such special instances to establish the point. Water can not rise above its source. The product of Capitalism can not choose but have the capitalist taint. The taint is twofold—the obverse and reverse of the same medal. The obverse of the medal presents Labor exploited, ground down, as a human merchandise whose supply steadily rises in the labor-market, can not choose but be ground down; the medal's reverse presents corruption, speculation, fraud and the whole decalogue of crimes triumphantly festering. There is not a single privately owned capitalist concern that does not present the two aspects: some seem to have them less pronouncedly, but then only when not probed by an investigation. Investigation uniformly proves them all abreast of one another in both respects. The New York gas investigation is but the freshest instance, while the corruption in the Army, the Navy and all other public concerns of Capitalism proves the point further. By no chemical process can the taint that cleaves to the individual capitalist firm be dissolved by placing any plant in the collective hands of the Capitalist Class, through its political agencies. Of this fact, America, being rawbonedly capitalist, can furnish infinitely more numerous and convincing instances than semi-feudal capitalist Europe. America, not Europe, is the field that the capitalist schemers after “municipalization” should study, gloat over and gather inspiration from.

Mr. John C. Winston had better stay at home—unless his purpose is to illustrate how capitalist municipalization schemes can be made to benefit the capitalist in their earliest stages by furnishing him with a pretext for a trip abroad where he may “do” the gay cities of Europe at the expense of the boobies at home.

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

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