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EDITORIAL

## THE MODERN RICHARD III.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**O**UR Washington letters during the last two weeks, dealing with the River and Harbor appropriations, particularly yesterday's, have furnished regular knockout blows to the pretences of our capitalist rulers that the legislation which they incubate is distinctly free from the class ear-mark. As a consequence, these letters have shed no indifferent light on the connection there is between the legislature and the factory, between the mill that turns out laws and the mill that turns out goods.

The only effect of improved machinery upon the relative positions of Capitalist and Workingman is to strengthen the power of the capitalist in fleecing the workingman, and to place the workingman more helplessly at the mercy of the fleecing capitalist. Improved or perfected machinery has that effect, under the capitalist or private ownership of the machinery system, in three ways. First, by rendering dearer the tool of production, it removes the tool more completely from the reach of ownership of the workingman; secondly, by rendering the tool more productive, vast layers of the middle class are compelled to come down to the level of the working class, thus swelling the supply of labor, and thereby lowering the price of labor-power or wages; finally, improved machinery weakens directly the position of the working class by its direct displacement of labor. Large ships are large tools: they bring on all these three results.

By the light of these undeniable economic facts, what other than "class legislation," "capitalist-class legislation," is the conduct of Congress when it appropriates the sum of \$4,000,000 in order that the already deep harbor of New York be deepened five feet more to allow ships, not yet built, and drawing thirty-four feet of water, to enter our port—and to encourage the building of such mammoth displacers of sailors? By the light of these undeniable economic facts, what else are such laws enacted by a capitalist Government but a decree of death to the welfare of the working class, a Government stimulus to the extensive

displacement of labor that, without stimulus, is proceeding fast enough, and is fast enough subjugating the workers?

The usurping Capitalist Class, in political power, is a modern Richard III. to the Working Class. Its every breath breathes death, its every look portends death, its every act inflicts death. Its decrees are marked with the usurper Richard's words: "Down, down to hell!" as he smote his victims.

The usurper Richard met his bloody Bosworth field. Upon the peaceful field of the hustings, the field of civilized warfare, let the usurper Capital be smitten by the heirs of the mourning that his class legislation constantly spreads like a pall,—the Proletariat of America.

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

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