

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 1, NO. 236.

NEW YORK, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 1901.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

A NOVEL “ROGUES’ GALLERY.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

SIMULTANEOUS with reports of the thrilling addresses that are being delivered by Carroll D. Wright upon the increasing well-being of the working class in this country—addresses that, in their way, are “thrilling enough for yellow covers”—, there comes the report from Brooklyn, thoroughly authenticated by Supt. W.W. Wheatley, that the employees of the Brooklyn Rapid Transit Company are now required to leave two photographs of themselves at the main office; of these, one is hung up in a gallery at the main office, and one in a gallery at the depot. The reason given for this new departure is that it will “help to detect employees, who are discharged for dishonesty.” In other words, the Company demands of its employees, as a condition precedent to going to work, that they place themselves upon the theory that some day they may be rogues, and that they, right off, stoop to the level of the rogues whose photos dangle from the walls of the “Rogues Gallery.”

Nor yet is this ghastly picture complete. To complete it, the further statement, made by the Superintendent, should be added, that the new regulation has in no manner affected the flow of applicants for jobs: the “flow continues unabated”: the applicants submit to the photograph requirement without a grumble.

It was one of the great Utopians, Sir Thomas More, the inventor of the word “Utopia,” who, already in his days, branded civilization as a “Penitentiary.” The conditions under which the working class is compelled to work, he pointed out, are the conditions imposed upon galley-slaves. Have things changed? Yes, for the worse!

They have changed for the worse in that the lash with which the “galley-slaves” of Sir Thomas More’s days were lashed into submission has become infinitely more sharp and degrading. The refined cannibalism that capitalism has developed into, is matched by the refined methods of moral degradation to which it resorts. Lashed by the cannibalistic whip of hunger to submit to expending five dollars’ worth of life-tissue for every one dollar’s worth of tissue-restoring wealth that it is allowed to keep, the working class of to-day, in this “home of the free and land of the brave,”

has been dieted to the frame of mind of meekly submitting to be treated like potential rogues,—and "the flow of applicants continues unabated."

Let the Carroll D. Wrights continue, unabated, their Pindaric songs about the "increasing well-being of the American working class"; let the Labor Lieutenants of his class continue, unabated, their nursery-tales about the wondrous feats of the "pure and simple" Trade Union! 'Tis all in vain, worse than in vain,—for the singers and story-tellers! The races that traveled with the westering sun, until they finally set their tents in the broad basin of the Ohio, Mississippi and Missouri, are not of the make-up that is petrified into a Chinese mold by hardships: the elasticity that characterizes them causes the extent of their depression to serve but as an indication of the extent of the rebound that is bound to follow.

Woe, that day, unto the modern grinders of the faces and the morale of the poor!

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

Uploaded January 2006