

EDITORIAL

WILL THE FATE OF DEVERY'S HEAD AFFECT THESE?

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE United Hebrew Charities, at a meeting held last Monday, received the annual report of its President. The following are a few of the passages in the report:

“Poverty among the Jews is increasing in New York. We cannot and dare not blind ourselves to this fact.

“The tenement houses and sweatshops of the great Ghetto of New York work havoc among our people.

“The total number of applicants at the relief bureau was 11,447 representing 50,228 persons. Of these 1,268 were widows, 971 were deserted women and 516 were consumptives.”

Was this report meant as a deliberate satire on the “What Carnegie Said and Did” campaign, that is going on in this city between the Democratic and the Republican capitalists, and whooped up by the labor fakirs, or is the report one of those “accidents,” that Providence periodically provides for the purpose of throwing light across the path of that intelligent portion of society that is capable of seeing, and in whose keeping the progress of the race has ever been? It matters not. Accident or intent, the report is exceptionally timely.

The class, whose affluence is a barometer of the poverty of the masses (Jew and Gentile), of the number of widows left destitute (Gentile and Jew), of the distress that produces “deserted women” (Jew and Gentile), of the plague spots named tenement houses and sweatshops, which, in turn, suggest and imply factories, railroad beds, stone yards and shops where consumptives (Gentile and Jew) are bred,—that widowhood, deserted girls, consumption and poverty among the workers—breeding

{ . . . ¹ }

¹ [At least one line of type is missing at this point in the text.]

class is tugging at what “Carnegie Said and Did,” and that “tug of war” comes down to what the fate shall be of Devery; and the labor lieutenants of that class help along the hurly with their blatant and doubly criminal conduct.

Deputy Police Commissioner Devery's head is but a feint. It is to the real issue what the sham nest of the Marsh-wren is to her real nest. The Marsh-wren trusts not to an exposed and conspicuous place the eggs that are dear to her. She builds a sham nest on top of the reeds; her real nest is built in a concealed spot. Thus she protects her brood. The birds of the field that prey upon her are by her strategy lured away from the true and beloved nest, to the sham one. While they wear themselves out pecking at the latter, her species thrives in the safety of the seclusion offered by the former. And so in this, as in all other political contests,—national, state and municipal—in which the capitalist class is periodically compelled to struggle for the continuance of its, to the working men, death-dealing hold on the public powers, does the capitalist class imitate the Marsh-wren's strategy. It raises into conspicuousness a sort of sham nest in the shape of false issues which it beats the tom-tom on, and all the while with the assistance of its labor lieutenants (Jew and Gentile), it carefully keeps in seclusion the real issue, a sort of real nest, in which its cherished eggs for fleecing the workers, pauperizing and blasting them are hatched. One day it is the tariff, another it is the “State Canal Frauds,” now it is the mutton head of a Devery.

As little as the tariff, as little as “State Frauds,” so little does the fate of Devery's head concern the working class. What concerns them is not mentioned by the sham combatants around Devery's head. What concerns them is the decapitation of the Capitalist System of production. That is the head whose fate determines the misery or the happiness of the workers. That's the nest towards which the Socialist Labor Party is marshaling the intelligence of the people;—and the report of the United Hebrew Charities, wittingly or unwittingly, helps to light the way to that cockatrice's nest.

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

Uploaded July 2006