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EDITORIAL

DEAD HAND ON THE THROTTLE

By DANIEL DE LEON

“**T**HE electrical jobbing trade of the United States is confronted with the problem of too many inventions, according to the members of the National Electrical Jobbers’ Association, which is in session here. Inventors are bringing out new appliances so rapidly that supposedly up-to-date machinery depreciates in value quickly, with great loss.” So ran the despatches from Saratoga, N.Y., on the 16th inst.

Too many inventions! What! Is it possible that too much machinery can be contrived to lighten the toil from human shoulders? Can the genius of man, working ever toward easy and plentiful production and the consequent possibility of increased leisure and self-improvement for the race, in fact outstrip itself, and create want by the very means calculated to relieve it? Is this what the Saratoga despatches mean?

Not a bit of it. Neither in the electrical industry nor in any other is there, nor can there be, machinery produced too plentifully or too rapidly for the race’s good. Twentieth century man is entitled to the best, and the encouraging sign of the times is that he is growing more and more convinced that the “best” of his fathers, of last decade, or of last year, even, is no longer good enough for him. He is pressing resistlessly forward; he can not be held back.

Who is it, then, that is hurt by the rapidity of new inventions in the electrical industry? Why, the jobbers, the manufacturers, the capitalists—the parasites, that is, upon the industry. They are not in the business for the race’s good, but for their own. Their own good decrees that they wring the greatest amount of use out of every machine they invest in. The rapid improvement of machinery interferes with this, it renders the expensive installation antiquated before the requisite amount of profit has been squeezed by it out of Labor’s loins. Hence the owner howls. To him it

would be preferable to stop the march of invention, to throw sand in the bearings of genius, to doom the world still longer to tedious and painful production, and in the shelter of the wreckage thus caused let him rake in the pennies.

In this point, as in all others, the capitalist, or private owner of the tools of production, once the leader of civilization against the feudal lord, has now become its bitterest enemy. In every quarter of the compass, his interests have become diametrically opposed to the good of society. His is a dead hand on the throttle of progress—and must be thrown off.

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