

The People.

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EDITORIAL

For Future History

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Dr. Herman M. Briggs and Dr. T. Mitchell Prudden, consulting physicians of the Health Department, have just issued, with the approval of the Department, a document, that should rank among the great historic pages of the “History of Capitalistic Society, its Stupidity and Criminality”—a work sure to be written some day.

Of late a number of the “400” have been taken off suddenly. Some died of consumption, others of pneumonia, several of the grippe, and not a few of diphtheria. Some of these diseases spring from filth, others from exposure, all from sources which the luxurious living and pampered idlers are presumably exempt from. Consternation broke out among the rich. Science, which, under Capitalism, is for hire, the same as every thing else, was summoned by our rulers and ordered to investigate; whereupon Science bowed, investigated, and, being prostituted, as is everything noble under Capitalism, brought forth a series of recommendations that do as much credit to the paymasters as to their hirelings.

Science discovered that all these diseases are spread by bacilli; that patients, suffering from them, expectorate on the streets and public conveyances; that their sputum, when dried by the action of the air, and pulverized by friction, set the bacilli free, these float in the air, are inhaled by the public, and thus spread disease and death in the quarters of the rich. The report is particularly emphatic upon the fact that no amount of care can prevent such infection, and no home, however sanitary, is thus free from contagion. After making all this clear the report proceeds to recommend as a preventive that police and other regulations be adopted to PREVENT EXPECTORATION IN PUBLIC.

It takes minds swayed by capitalist immorality to conceive such a notion, and minds crippled by capitalist habits of thought to propose such a plan:

1. Every one seeks health; to call public attention to a bad habit is good; but imagine that a bad habit of this sort could be stopped by the police is insane. The idea is promotive of side-splitting cartoons.

2. Who is it that, being indisposed, would fail to seek and keep the shelter of his house? The capitalist? Certainly not! Nothing compels him to expose himself. His stocks and bonds and lands draw dividends, interest, profit and rent steadily along. It is the workingman, who, despite sickness, must go about. If he does not, he starves. Forced to go to work with incipient pneumonia, diphtheria, grippe, etc., what else can he do but expectorate freely, for relief?

3. Filth and exposure are the sources of all these diseases. To neither is the capitalist class exposed. The workingman is held down to both. His wages force him to live in lodgings—the property of capitalists and landlords—where ventilation is impossible without a draft. And then, in factory and mill, on the surface and elevated roads, the exposure to which he is—by the capitalist system—compelled to submit renders him an easy prey to all these deadly diseases.

Accordingly, the recommendation of hired Science amounts to this: Notwithstanding capitalism forces the workers to live in unsanitary homes, notwithstanding it forces them to expose themselves to disease, and notwithstanding it puts and keeps them in a position that if they do not work they have no bread—yet, notwithstanding, the worker shall not expectorate and relieve himself.

In other words, through its prostituted Science, Capitalism in New York contemplates issuing a Russian ukase to this effect:

“Working people, either swallow your sputum when you are out of your pest holes, or stay in-doors and starve—all for the greater glory of us parasites who claim the vested right of living upon you and enjoying life at your expense.”

For all-around bestiality soaked withal in stupidity, capitalist “thought” overtops the worst there ever was.

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

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