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EDITORIAL

SO SAY WE, TOO!

By DANIEL DE LEON

Upon the inquiries made by the Labor Commissioner of North Carolina regarding compulsory education and labor legislation for the factories in that State, one J.C. Reece makes a very full answer in which the following pregnant passage occurs:

“I would say, compel people to educate themselves and their children. I am not in favor of paying another cent of school tax until people are compelled to attend the schools. If we ever have skilled labor we must have educated labor. EDUCATION IS NOT TO KEEP US FROM BEING ‘HEWERS OF WOOD AND DRAWERS OF WATER,’ BUT THAT WE MAY HEW MORE WOOD AND DRAW MORE WATER, WITH GREATER EASE AND MORE PROFIT TO OUR EMPLOYERS.”

This letter fairly bristles with points, and these points, like “the quills upon the fretful porcupine” indicate clearly the nature of the animal shooting them out, besides throwing strong light on recent North Carolina happenings. Like a photograph it shows the manufacturer in the New South to be twin brother to the infant-murdering English manufacturer of 1840, with the additional touch of that peculiar Southern savagery which is known as “chivalry” to the readers of the hysterical novels of Southern life.

It shows clearly what the capitalist means when he talks of “education.”

Under Capitalism, the working people are not educated for the purpose of bettering their condition but so as to be of more service to the capitalist, so as to be able “to hew more wood and draw more water.” All the good that accrues from the increase of education, progress of the arts, etc., goes to the capitalist class; the workers, being mere wealth-producing machines, only get what the machine gets:—enough oil to keep them in working condition. To them it matters not how much wealth increases: they get no more of it. Is their ignorance broken up by education? That but serves to render their slavery more bitter, but not to benefit

them by a share of that wealth which this increase of knowledge enables them to produce.

With a boldness seldom equalled by his Northern compeer, this “chivalrous” Southern capitalist states the purpose of his class in “educating” the working people: “So that they may hew more wood and draw more water,” “with more profit for their employers.” This, says J.C. Reece, is the purpose of education,—under Rep.-Dem. capitalism.

So say we too.

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

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