

# DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 2, NO. 178.

NEW YORK, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 25, 1901.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

## CHRISTMAS CHEER.

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**T**HERE are two sides to Christmas which bring into vivid relief the position of the classes in society. A careful compilation of the number of persons who will eat to-day from the cold hand of organized charity shows that there are over 90,000 heads of families who have been unable to provide Christmas cheer for themselves and those near to them. Politicians will advertise themselves by feeding their impoverished followers; churches will return a little of what they have received during the year; newspapers will try to boom their circulation by sending baskets of food to the poor; charitable organizations will deal out their little dole; then there will be the thousands of unrecorded instances of individuals who will give a little. These latter are not included in the 90,000 which have been paraded before the eyes of the community during the last month. They form a contingent in themselves, but its size is not known.

All this does not prove that the world opens its great heart to help sufferers. It does not prove that the influence of Christ and the Prophets animates the world. It simply proves that there is a large and a growing larger element in the country that struggles along as best it can during the rest of the year, and at Christmas time cheer must throw itself on the mercy of other men to provide a reasonably decent meal.

The bills of fare as given show what that one good meal a year is. The best one consists of a small turkey, costing less than a dollar; sweet potatoes, costing ten cents; bread, costing five cents; fruit and nuts, costing twenty-five cents; extras, costing about ten cents. The total cost is in the neighborhood of \$1.50—and it is on this, given once a year, that society founds its claim to humanitarianism! That meal is provided for five persons, and the average cost is thirty cents. Counting those who

will be fed in herds and those to whom baskets will be sent, there are about 200,000 persons who will, to-day, have a thirty cent meal. What must they eat during the rest of the year?

But this is only one side of the picture. Contrasted with penury, with squalor, and with misery, there are plenty, luxury, and extravagance. The poor child who hung up its stocking last night and found it empty to-day, has opposite to him the rich man who hangs up the working class every day and finds it always full of good things. The capitalist class, if it is not squandering wealth abroad, will riot at Lakewood, at Ashville, in Florida, at the Hot Springs, or else will stay in New York and dine at some expensive hotel. The menus published for the different hotels give a bewildering array of things, at a price that would be bewildering to a workingman. The cost for each dinner ranges from \$10 to \$25, and wine, of which there will be an abundance, will cost extra. The workingman who produces all wealth cannot to-day pay \$1.50 for a meal for himself and family. The capitalist who produced not a cent, can pay from \$50 to \$125, and still have a few eagles for wine. The workingman wrongs his family if he spends five cents for a glass of beer. The capitalist can throw hundreds of dollars into drink, and his family will not suffer.

This is but the outside show. To-day it comes to the surface, because of the poor as an advertising medium by those who need advertising. The poor have not enough to eat on this glad Christmas day. They have not enough to eat on all other days of the year and there are no baskets sent to them. They have not enough to eat because they are plundered to-day, and because they are plundered every other day. The poor, the working class, supply the table of the capitalist with the richest and the rarest, and the good hearted capitalist searches around for a few cold-storage turkeys that would not keep, and a few other things that come cheap, and throws them to the poor.

It is charity, and like charity it hides a multitude of sins. The working class has no cause to be thankful for what is given it, because it is the working class that produces everything. It is insulted to-day. It is robbed to-day. It will continue to be insulted and robbed until it claims and takes its own by the proper exercise of the suffrage, until it ousts the robber class, until it takes the powers of government and uses them to give the producer all that he produces, and in these times the producer

produces more for himself than a thirty cent meal once a year.

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

Uploaded August 2006