

EDITORIAL

THE SPIRIT OF REFORM.

By DANIEL DE LEON

“**E**VIDENT and prevalent neglect to exercise simple and ordinary precautionary measures” is the reason given by James P. Whiskeman, the advisory engineer, in his report to the State Factory Investigating Commission, for the loss of life in the fire which destroyed the Binghamton Clothing Company’s factory. And the report goes on to specify in detail the derelictions of the Company, all of which derelictions were in violation of Factory Laws.

So far, the Spirit of Reform does not transpire in full, or peculiarly instructive. That Factory Laws are reform laws everybody knows; and everybody knows that, the same being reform laws, they are in the nature of scarecrows on which the capitalist crow is invited to and does roost comfortably. But the report goes on and actually unveils the Spirit of Reform in all its dazzling beauty.

“Laws passed last winter at the instance of the State Factory Investigating Commission,” says Engineer Whiskeman, “fully cover the requirements and furnish adequate protection for the lives of employes of factories,” but, “although the State Industrial Board, created under the law which re-organized the Labor Department, has the power to compel” the enforcement of the factory provisions, nevertheless “a mandatory requirement” should be established. How beautifully reformatory!—

Laws are enacted fully covering the safety of employes.

That not being effective enough, further laws are enacted empowering certain officials to enforce the laws;

And is that not yet enough?—further laws should be enacted rendering the previous ones mandatory.

Of course, when the mandatory laws shall have been enacted, it will be found advisable to enact additional ones to render the mandatory requirements doubly

mandatory; and, then, still newer laws to render the doubly mandatory laws triply mandatory; and so on.

The unwearying, sleepless solicitude of Reform for the enforcement of Law in behalf of the proletariat is one of the features that distinguish our generation from all others; it is a feature that marks a new era; it is a feature that exhibits the Spirit of Reform as the bright particular Spirit among all the spooks that issue from the spook cabinet of bourgeoisdom.

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