

EDITORIAL

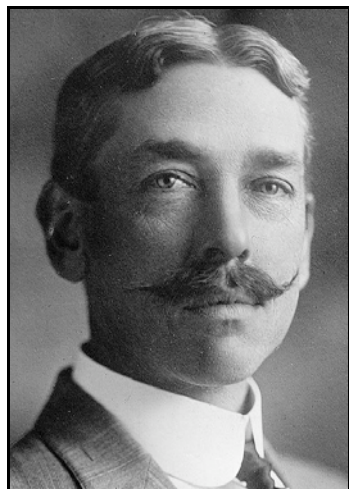
OPEN LETTER TO HOMER FOLKS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

TO Homer Folks
Sec'y State Charities Aid Ass'n.
New York, N.Y.

Dear Sir—

While not questioning the motives of your Association in drafting and promoting Bill No. 974 of the Senate for the purpose of “promoting more humane treatment of persons arrested for public intoxication,” a careful perusal of the Bill



HOMER FOLKS (1867-1963)

with which you kindly accompanied your letter of the 13th of this month, requesting the support of the *Daily People*, convinces us that the Bill not only aims wide of the mark, but that would, indirectly, tend to promote the very evil—intoxication—upon which are grafted the improper practices that you aim at remedying.

Inebriety being one of the consequences of the mental strain due to insecurity of making a living, and seeing that insecurity in obtaining a livelihood deepens and widens, the phenomenon of increasing inebriety is natural. We shall not here go into that particular branch of the argument which points to the waste of energy directed into channels that neglect the cause and grapple with its effects. We shall pass that by, and consider your position itself.

The Socialist Labor Party by no means rejects palliatives, absolutely and under all circumstances. The Party gives all needed weight to palliatives that will relieve immediate suffering, and thus afford relief while steadily keeping its eye upon the ultimate goal—the uprooting of the to-day iniquitous social system of which

inebriety, together with its long train of evils, is but a consequence. If your Bill offered such a palliative it would receive the Party's support; at any rate, it would not meet the Party's opposition. Your Bill, however, so far from being a palliative, would aggravate the ill.

A twin sister of increasing inebriety is the evil of an increasing mass of public officials. The one and the other evil draw their sap from the identical soil of increasing insecurity, if not of downright inability to earn a living. With economic opportunities for independent livelihood steadily reduced; with the mental worry to make both ends meet spreading ever further, not only is the rush to liquor as a nepenthe inevitable, but also the rush for office. A study of contemporaneous Federal, as well as State and Municipal legislation will reveal the secret that our legislators are hard put to it to find jobs for idle constituents. The existing jobs are not enough to go around. New berths must be provided for. These they strain to create. But legislation lags far behind what Panama Canals, Philippine purchases, enlarged Armies and increased Navies, new Courts with their retinue of tipstaves, new Boards for this and that and the other, new Executive Departments, etc., etc., can accomplish in the way of furnishing berths. The demand is ever on the increase. Our governmental machinery is to-day much in the fix that the Roman patriciate found itself in when the Imperial Republic began to take its plunge to destruction. The swelling number of Roman citizens barred from all opportunity to earn a living clamored to be taken care of. The purblind ruling class could see only one of two things to do, and it flew from the one to the other, each time leaving things worse than before—it either arrogantly ignored the “clamor” of the “mob,” with the consequence of bloody riots, which, although regularly drowned in the blood of the “rioters,” never were quelled without the loss of patrician lives as well; or it yielded to the “clamor” by the creation of new legions and planning new expeditions of rapine to furnish the fresh legions with occupation. In the former case the cause of the evil was left untouched, in the latter it was intensified by broadening its area.

The task of providing employment by creating public offices is as bootless as would be the task of filling a bottomless barrel. It creates a class of official menials, with their heels giped by the would-be menials left out in the cold. The mental strain, escaped by entering into office, is only changed into a fresh mental strain to

keep it. The demoralizing effect of such a status need but to be hinted at. Inebriety just escaped, is bound to be plunged in anew. It is no accident, it is a significant fact, that excessive indulgence in liquor is a feature of our public employedom. Thus corruption and inebriety become blended into one.

Such is the only practical result that would flow from your Senate Bill No. 974. Though, probably, not intended to create additional public berths to accommodate would-be placemen unable to earn a living otherwise, as is so often the case with our charitable institutions, that, nevertheless, would be the only practical effect of the Bill. It produces a corps of new public officials. What may be expected from such, in general, has already been indicated. The special function of the officials, whom Bill No. 974 creates—being, moreover, the Malapropian one of mopping back the tidal flood of drunkenness that capitalist society fatedly raises—with them the temptation for corruption would be only all the greater, harder to resist, and more certain to spread pollution.

For these reasons *The People* regrets it can not meet your wishes to promote Senate Bill No. 974. We now have more public “servants” by the grace of the Political State than is good for the commonweal.

Very truly yours.

EDITOR DAILY PEOPLE.

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