

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 11, NO. 298.

NEW YORK, MONDAY, APRIL 24, 1911.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

POOR OLD “DIRTY WORK.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

FRANKLIN W. HOBBS, president of the National Association of Cotton Manufacturers, who in his Boston speech to that body on the 11th inst. stated that “It is estimated that there are 1,500,000,000 persons on earth, of whom only 500,000,000 are completely clothed, and 750,000,000 only partly clothed,” did more than prove the bankruptcy of capitalism in respect to filling the needs of the race. He also, in the same speech, knocked flat one of the cardinal objections his class is continuously urging against the system of nation-wide co-operation which is about to sweep them away—“Who will do the dirty work?”

Within a few sentences of the sentence above quoted, Pres. Hobbs recounted the invention and successful operation of the cotton harvesting machine, which, he said, would give the cotton industry a new impulse, and lift it out of its present slump, “the worst in twenty-five years.”

The Eliot cotton harvester is a wonderful machine. Long scoffed at and called impossible, just as was the type setting machine, it has now “made good.” “There never will be machine invented that can pick cotton, except just these!” an extensive Southern cotton grower once exclaimed, excitedly waving his ten fingers before his auditors. That machine is now in successful operation. It separates the cotton from the boll cleanly, it skips the unripened bolls, and more important still, it leaves the plants uninjured for subsequent pickings as the bolls ripen. Each Eliot cotton harvest does the work of forty men, and their general use would save the cotton bosses, it is estimated, \$150,000,000 yearly in wages.

What has been done in the line of cotton, has been done in other lines.

A new railroad track layer and tamper, with a crew of five men, does the work of 100.

A paper wetting machine recently installed in the U.S. Bureau of Printing and

Engraving, with one girl does the work of twenty men and thirty women—fifty in all.

Edison, the far-sighted inventor, looks forward to the time when not only will parts of products be manufactured by machine, but the parts themselves, assembled by the machine, without human agency, thus making it possible, as he whimsically phrases it, to “feed in cloth and buttons at one end, and get finished suits of clothing at the other.”

When such miracles of inventive genius are possible in the channels of displacing labor and adding to profits, unthinkable is it that a Socialist society, existing not for profit but for the comfort and well-being of its people, will not be able to perform similar or even greater miracles of mechanics to “do the dirty work.”

The old question has served its time. It now only frightens babies.

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Uploaded February 2012

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