

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 12, NO. 267.

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, MARCH 23, 1912.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

DETROIT AN OBJECT LESSON.

By DANIEL DE LEON

IN its leading editorial on March 12, and under the above heading, the Detroit *Free Press* states:

“We have been witnessing in this center of busy industry a most remarkable increase in every activity of humanity during the last decade. Our population gain has been unparalleled among the country’s cities of our class: Men have thronged to this city and have found employment as fast as they arrived, receiving in return for their labor compensation that would have passed the brightest dreams of former generations of workers. In wages, abundance of employment, brevity of work time, comforts of life, and everything that goes to make existence enjoyable, Detroit workingmen are now, and have been for several years, blessed far beyond the average lot.”

And the paper follows up the rosy picture with the question:

“How much of the industry that has caused all this development would exist to-day if Socialism had been in control of the world a decade ago?”

The question is an infelicitous one.

Addressing ourselves exclusively to the question, we shall abstain from joining issue with the rosy picture drawn of Detroit’s proletariat. Addressing ourselves exclusively to the question, we shall not go into the details of proletarian low wages, long hours, and other evidences of Detroit proletarian suffering, sufficiently indicated by the Michigan low wage average (\$400). Addressing ourselves exclusively to the question—“How much of the industry that has caused all this development in Detroit would exist to-day if Socialism had been in control of the world a decade ago?”—; and accepting as true the *Free Press* rosy picture of its city, the answer is:

“However rosy the picture, it is, by its own showing, a picture of human beings sold and bought in a labor market;—hence, it is a picture of a state of things in

which human beings are merchandise;—hence, it is a picture in which workers—however wonderfully paid, even ‘past the brightest dreams of former generations’ when the productivity of Labor was much less than now—are plundered of a large share of the product of their labor, now when the productivity of Labor has vastly increased. Therefore, ‘if Socialism had been in control of the world a decade ago,’ then, it would be impossible for exploitation to exist in Detroit to-day; then, the ‘rosy picture’ now described by the *Free Press*, would look black as ink, compared with the brilliant picture that Detroit would otherwise present,—a town, like all the others in the Socialist world, in which Labor, no longer a chattel, would receive its FULL social share of its product, and no Detroit millionaire heiress Clara Ward could be wasting in Europe, as Princess de Chimay, the substance of Detroit proletarians.{”}

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Uploaded March 2013

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