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EDITORIAL

CHARITIES! CHARITIES!

By DANIEL DE LEON

WHAT is being called the “Pennsylvania Overturn”—the downfall of the Pennsylvania boss Boise Penrose, and the ascension to power in Penrose’s place of William Flinn—is being celebrated as the “great event” in the Keystone State, as the “new birth” of her people’s freedom. And cheers are being justified by the cheerers by pointing with pride to the list of laws that the Pennsylvania Republican State Convention has promised to cause to be enacted.

What are the items on that list? The list—it is pronounced a “New Charter”—may be judged by the “last and not least” of its promises, the promise that caps the rest. It is the creation of a Department of Public Charities.

In the best of regulated Commonwealths accidents will happen. For one thing, blind Nature exposes peoples’ limbs, health and life to trials; for another, the imperfections of man render him a more or less perpetual, however involuntary a source of harm to others, besides himself. That even in the happiest of Commonwealths there will be physical sufferers, goes without saying. It likewise goes without saying that the sufferers will have to be attended to. That the work of attending to these is a work of kindness and benevolence is clear. But “Charities,” a whole “Department” thereof—that whatever else it may spell, surely does not spell popular wellbeing; whatever else it may not spell, it spells popular misery.

Where “Charities” arise, there is mass poverty, with all its accompaniments. “Charities” tell of excessive misery one end of the social ladder, and excessive affluence on the other. There is no “Charities” possible without the two extremes. And where the two extremes are found it is unquestionable that the extreme of penury is due to the extreme of affluence. In its last analysis, “Charities” is the penny salve that Luxury soothes its own conscience with for the cruel wounds that it inflicts upon those whom it plunders, whom it thrusts into misery, and whose misery

breaks out into “cases that require charity.”

Tested by this test, tested by the coping stone of the list of law{s} that are to be enacted, the “new birth” of the people of Pennsylvania is but a new birth for one set of political plunderers who hitherto had a stony road to travel, the road of competition with the set whom they overthrew.

Pennsylvania’s proletariat experiences no “New Birth” with the overthrow of a Penrose and his substitution with a Flinn. To the proletariat of Pennsylvania the Flinn “program of laws” is no “New Charter.” The necessity of “Charities,” a “Charities Department,” at that, establishes the fact.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
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slpns@slp.org