

DAILY PEOPLE

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EDITORIAL

IDLERS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

A KIND hearted lady, who desires “not to be published”—we interpret the desire to mean that she only wishes her identity be not revealed—writes:

“I do say that there is much truth in your Open Letter to Mrs. Walston Hill Brown of the Child Welfare League. I do wish the members of the League would take your words to heart. What I mean to criticize is the name of ‘Idlers’ with which you define the employers. I think that on second consideration you will agree with me that employers are no ‘Idlers’ and are very active people. If you knew them as I do you would feel with me that these employers are constantly at work. There are those of us who are what you call ‘Capitalists’ and do not work. I confess I’m one of them. But I am no employer,” etc., etc.

We hope our fair correspondent will not deem us un-gallant if, so far from agreeing with her, we make a second effort to induce her to agree with us—the first effort being the open letter which she happened to read.

When using words *The People* uses them in their technical sense, the technical sense they have in the literature of the Movement.

In its dictionary, or general sense in literature, the word “Idler” means a person who does nothing, who spends his time in inaction. In this sense of the word it does not apply to the employer, either as an individual or as a class. Unfortunately for present day civilization, the employer, so far from “doing nothing,” so far from “spending his time in inaction,” spends his time in feverish action and doing lots of things. What may these things be? Is the employer’s activity conducive to the production of a single useful article, a single useful thought? Not at all. The employer’s activity consists in scheming schemes whereby he may transfer to his own pockets the wealth that is in the pockets of others, and whereby he may turn towards his pockets in larger and ever larger volume the stream of wealth that the working

class is sweated out of. The only visible, tangible things we can think of that the employer produces are “laws” which he “inspires” and causes his Legislatures to grind out; and these laws are essentially what Senator La Follette called them, sharpers’ traps. In economics such activity as employers now indulge in are barren of all good.

In the technical sense of the word, “Idler” is a cap that fits the employer. Under the same cap comes the capitalist.

“Idler,” in the Movement, is a term that has “Worker” as its opposite. Society, accordingly, as stated in the open letter which our fair critic criticizes, is divided between “Workers” and “Idlers.” The fact being obvious, however obviously disagreeable to the “Idlers” its statement may be, we have no choice but to stick to it—and invite all others to join us.

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