

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 2, NO. 50.

NEW YORK, MONDAY, AUGUST 19, 1901.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

WORKERS AS SQUEEZED LEMONS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

ONE morning last week the papers contained the announcement that a working man, Henry Ballinger, was found dying of starvation in the doorway of a private residence in this city. Inquiry brought out a tale that is an indictment upon the social system of to-day.

The spokesmen of capitalism are in the habit of committing the double crime—a crime that wrong-doers always resort to—, of seeking to cover their own malfeasance by throwing blame upon their victims. Thus one is familiar with the charges that the workingman is “improvident,” “dissolute,” “debauched,” “given to excesses,” “lazy,” “shiftless,” etc., etc. One and each of these “justifications” for capitalist felony on the working class inquiry in the case of Ballinger barred out; it barred them out so completely that even the brazen apostles of capitalist inhumanity have not ventured to advance them.

Ballinger was found to have been provident, he was found to have led an orderly life; he was temperate, a model husband, industrious, diligent. For twenty years he had worked as bookbinder in one firm of this city; and at his fifty-sixth year, after a life-time of faithful work, he is discharged. On what ground? On the ground that he was TOO OLD! During a life-time this workingman produced wealth in large quantity: the bulk of it went to the idle employer: he kept, was allowed to keep, no more than the dray-horse, aye, less: worn out, his life-tissue expended in the service of the capitalist fleecer faster than the pittance wages could restore, he found himself, at the age of fifty-six, a wreck, a squeezed lemon, squeezed of all its juice, and thrown as such into the garbage barrel of society, to rot with other refuse!

The social system, where one human being can fare thus, has a leakage that damns it at the bar of conscience and of judgment. And the verdict of guilty must be pronounced with all the greater indignation and deliberateness seeing that no excuse exists for such a fate as Ballinger met with, and the whole working class is exposed to. Society is not—surely not to-day—, in the state of a ship-wrecked crew,

hanging to a raft, and where man is thrown back upon the brute conditions he has slowly been developing out of,—the condition that predicates the life of one man upon the death of an other. Cannibalism need not to-day be a ruling principle. The law of self-preservation no longer can justify the Ballinger fate. Society has developed in such a way that the brute law of self-preservation has undergone a complete revolution. To-day the safety of each promotes the safety of all. This condition, the one condition that draws sharp the line between modern possibilities for good and former impossibilities, is the glory of the age. Thanks to the modern machinery of production, together with the co-operative labor that it enforces on man, the productivity of the race is so tremendous that the joys of childhood, the dignity of womanhood, the comfort of manhood, and the repose of old age are all securable to all. That the reverse is the fact; that a few,—the idlers, at that,—sponge up a life of luxury, and the masses—the workers, at that,—are Ballingered, is the result of capitalist rule, a rule for the overthrow of which the Socialist Labor Party calls upon the Working Class and all decent people to rally around its standard.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded June 2006