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EDITORIAL

THE POOR MANUFACTURER!

By DANIEL DE LEON

MR. Milton P. Higgins, president of the Norton Emery Wheel Company, of Worcester, Mass., wept several tears before the Training Department of the National Educational Association of Boston on the 9th inst. The tears were dropped in the course of an address delivered by him on "Education for the Trades." To sum up the allegations of fact and the conclusions of Mr. Higgins on the sorrows and troubles that beset the manufacturers, himself among the lot no doubt, this is the state of things:

Skilful workmen are rare; they are so rare that the manufacturer often has to give good pay to "an untidy, coarse, ignorant, profane and drunken" fellow if he is a skilful man. The reason of it is that education is faulty. Manual training in the schools has brought no help. It only lays "a broad foundation for a better manhood," but what the manufacturer stands in need of is not "broad foundations," "better manhood" and all that sort of thing, but skilled workmen, men who have received a proper education for the trades. Schools for technical training have proved failures, what they turn out is not available. No better are engineering colleges. A manufacturer, "after he has filled with entire satisfaction all the important engineering positions in the factory with efficient technical engineering graduates, still finds his unmet need for skilled workmen as great as ever."—Due to such distressing conditions, Mr. Higgins weeps for the manufacturers, the sorely tried darlings.

It is obvious that what really troubles Mr. Higgins is to find good men cheap. That's the sum and substance of his jeremiade. The graduates of the technical and engineering schools, of whom there are more than jobs for, would make good skilled workmen, but they want higher pay than the skilled workmen that Mr. Higgins is after. This being the real fact, sympathy with Mr. Higgins and his fellow

manufacturers is out of place. They are themselves to blame. Had they been less vociferous in floating the lie “plenty of room above,” these graduates would not have gone as numerous into the technical and engineering schools; less training would have done, and they could now be overstocking the “skilled workmen” market to Mr. Higgins’ heart’s content. Their present absence from that market, wider knowledge, and greater pretensions are all due to the Higginses.

But these gentlemen need not fret. For a while things will be hard for them. But not long. Soon the market will be overstocked with these graduates. When that day comes their “pretensions” will have come down, and then Mr. Higgins and his brother manufacturers, reversing the experience of the Pharaohs, will have a fat season after the lean. After having been compelled “to give good pay” to “untidy, coarse, ignorant, profane and drunken” fellows because they were skilled workmen and there were not enough of them, they will then be in condition to give what pay they may please to the tidiest, gentlest, most trained, Sunday-schoolish and total abstainers of graduates: they will find all they want of these goods: they will be able to take their pick and will then make up for the present “hard times” they are having.

In the meantime, of course, poor manufacturers!

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