

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 8, NO. 215.

NEW YORK, FRIDAY, JANUARY 31, 1908.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

MODERN MALAPROPS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

MRS. Frederick Nathan, President of the New York City Consumers' League, states in her annual report:

“The present system of licensing tenements has failed to protect child workers, since children of three, four and five can work legally in tenement homes. A large proportion of the children found working were between the ages of five and ten. Of sixty-seven children who did not attend school, forty were violating the compulsory education law and twenty-three were too young to be protected by its provisions.

“The laws are ineffective, helplessly ineffective in some respects, not only because the numbers of inspectors is ridiculously inadequate, but because punishment does not reach out to strike the real offenders. The poor, ignorant workers may be arrested, but the landlord is hard to reach, and the manufacturer who gives out the work is in no way made liable.”

When reading such an array of facts one may well wonder how long it will take such well-intentioned people, as constitute the Consumers' League, to learn the lesson loudly enough preached by the facts they gather, that they are but modern Malaprops—seeking to stem a flood with a mop.

All the facts enumerated in Mrs. Nathan's report converge to prove that the force which the Consumers' League is up against, is a force that knows “twenty tricks” to preserve its existence, to every “one trick” that sentimental people may devise to clip that force's wings.

The Government we have to-day is the capitalists' government—pure and simple. There are not in that government, as one-time in the British Parliament, two sets of warring rulers. In our legislatures and capitols we have but one ruling class, the capitalist class—pure and simple. Under such circumstances, there is nothing of real importance that can be fetched from such a source in the interest of the workers. The capitalist legislatures may not say so, they do not say so, that they

look upon the sentimentalists with something very much akin to contempt—but they act upon the principle. Hence their seeming listening to the wails of sentimentalists, and the stopping of the latters' mouth with laws that are ineffective.

One should think that the intelligence, that can perceive how utterly insufficient the principle of child labor and kindred laws are, and how utterly inadequate the provisions of the law are to enforce even the insufficient sop which it grants—one should think the intelligence, such as Mrs. Nathan is gifted with, would realize that it is tugging at a wrong cord.

But the age of miracles does not yet seem to be past. Among modern miracles, the smallest surely is not the Malaproprian attitude of the unquestionably intelligent constituency of the Consumers' League.

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

Uploaded December 2009

slpns@slp.org