

# The People.

VOL. IX.—NO. 50.

HENRY KUHN, NAT'L SEC'Y, S.L.P.

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, MARCH 11, 1900

PRICE 2 CENTS.

EDITORIAL

## WHY "PHILANTHROPY" HALTS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**E**lsewhere in this issue will be found a chapter from MARX' *Capital* on the laborious poor, showing the needfulness of these to capitalist society, and how they actually constitute the mine from which is drawn the affluence of the capitalists, and upon which their wealth rests. The article also shows with citations from distinguished capitalist economists that, while the relieving of the wants of the poor is a wise act, yet the curing of the evil would be folly, inasmuch as it would cut off capitalist society from its base of supplies. These observations explain a certain phenomenon that is of frequent recurrence, and that is otherwise puzzling, to wit, the halting attitude of Philanthropy.

When the "Philanthropist" starts in, he wraps himself in a cloak of humane phrases: the love for his kind seems to dominate his mind: "do unto others as you would be done by" seems to be his guiding star. And yet, ere one knows, his course begins to veer. He whose mind is dominated by love for his kind, whose conduct is guided by the principle to do unto others as he would be done by, cannot but be anxious to cure, as well as alleviate, pain; with such a person, the idea of stopping short of a cure, much more so the deliberate preventing of a cure, and deliberate nursing of the ill must be wholly absent from his mind; and utterly repellant must to such a person be the idea of nursing the evil itself, so as to have a perennial opportunity to exercise philanthropy. Not so the "Philanthropist." He will go so far and no further. He will alleviate, but not cure; the proposition to cure is decried by him with all the invectives at his command.

Of this we are just being furnished with an illustration by Philanthropist JACOB S. RIIS. The tenement house system he loathes: it breeds untold evils among the poor. Now, then, does he set his cap to abolishing the tenement house system? Oh, no! His whole aim is to "reduce the evil." The tenement house breeder of whole volumes of ills is to have its wings clipped so that it may breed only half volumes;

and as to destroying the capitalist system itself—that microbe one of whose secretions is the tenement house system impurity—perish the thought! Not only would Philanthropist RIIS not be so “unpatriotic,” he does his level best to uphold the putrid microbe by singing the praises of one of its pillars—THEODORE ROOSEVELT, of improved policeman’s club reputation.

As stated in the pamphlet *The Class Struggle*, now about to be republished by the Labor News Co.:

Poverty is felt by the capitalist class to be a source of danger for the whole social fabric; it breeds famine, pestilence and crime. Accordingly, a few of the more clear-headed and more humane among the capitalist class are willing to do something for the proletariat; but the bulk of these, who neither dare nor can afford to break with their own class, the problem is not the ABOLITION, but only the ALLEVIATION, of poverty. To abolish poverty were to abolish the proletariat, and that is not their purpose. The proletariat is, by all means, to continue, able to work, and satisfied with its condition. This is the extent to which capitalist philanthropy goes, or can go.

The working class must rely upon itself alone. It must itself be the bestower upon itself of whatever good things it is to enjoy. All other sources are but sources of degrading alms and fettering slavery.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.  
Uploaded May 2005