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EDITORIAL

## CHILDREN AS SOURCES OF REVENUE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**A** NEWS item from a Southern paper says:—  
“Children under twelve years of age, who work in the cotton mills eleven hours a day, had a prominent part in the Columbia (S.C.) Labor Day parade.”

They were not there for the purpose of bringing a blush of shame to the face of the inhuman employers who profit by the children, nor were they there for the purpose of calling the attention of the onlookers to conditions that exist in the mills. They were not there to expose gross brutality and inhuman depravity. They were there for the honor and glory of pure and simpledom. They were a living exposition of the “power” that the American Federation has acquired. They demonstrated the “gigantic numbers,” the “matchless force” that the trades union has gained.

South Carolina is a new field. Its industry is a thing of yesterday. It has not, as have the older industrial centers, a large working class population that is literally born in the mill and the factory. Its workers were made within a comparatively recent time, yet they exhibit all the marks of the older sections. The trades unions have the same characteristics, the same heartlessness, and the same appalling and wanton disregard for the interests of their members.

Last Spring an attempt was made to shorten the hours of labor and increase the school age of mill children. The press and the pulpit, the spokesmen of capitalism and the spokesmen of trades unionism fought the measure, inefficient and insignificant as it was. They claimed that the growing industry of the State would be ruined. A blow would be struck at another great American institution. So great was the opposition to the bill that even those who had at first championed it found it advisable to turn their faces against it when the time came to vote.

The trades unions of Columbia showed their appreciation of this act by dragging the children behind them in their annual parade of shame. They exhibited

to the world their grovelling and dastardly attitude on all questions concerning the welfare of the working class. Those little children, all under twelve years of age, are the raw material out of which Southern “belles” and chivalrous Southern gentlemen grind the profits that enable them to live the luxurious life of the idler, and the gay and careless saunterer along the sunny paths of life. The children may be broken on the rack of industry, they may be sapped and stunted morally, mentally and physically. But the chivalrous Southern gentleman and the radiant Southern belle have no thought of that. They cannot concern themselves with questions of “mere trade and commerce.”

Those little children are also the raw material out of which the labor leader spins his blood-stained fortune. A Howard of Fall River, when nature rebels against his excesses and sends him to an asylum, can leave a fortune of \$150,000 for heirs to fight over. An Arthur of Cleveland can live in the most exclusive part of the city and have a rating in *Bradstreet's*. Every cent that they have is foul with crime against the working class. Every cent that they have is the wages of treason. There in Columbia, South Carolina, another Howard and another Arthur are in process of formation. The field is good and the crop is abundant. For, in “labor’s parade,” little children, under twelve years of age, little children who work eleven hours a day, are the feature of the occasion.

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

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