

EDITORIAL

## TAFT ON THE BOWERY.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**A**BOUT 500 unemployed, as many as could be crammed into the Bowery Mission, were entertained on Monday the 13th in the basement of the Mission with tobacco and coffee, and, the singing of hymns being less expensive than coffee and tobacco, were later taken to the chapel and kept busy singing in expectation of the arrival of the President, who was booked to visit the “boys.”

The crowd had just got through with *I'm Holding On* and had switched to *Nearer, My God, to Thee* when President Taft entered. Photographers' cameras flashed and boomed. The real incident was above and beyond photography.

There, in the presence of 500 men, all of them willing, anxious, able to work but condemned to idleness by a social system that bars the wage slave from the opportunity to exercise his labor-power unless some employer can whack profit out of him;—there, in the presence of those 500 men, a veritable “delegation” of the tens of thousands of others who are tramping the land, and of the many more than 500 who on that very night, the wettest December known for years, breasted the storm in search of shelter;—there, facing such a sight, stood the Chief Representative of Capitalism—and, did what? He did, unconscious though the deed was, contribute his share to eliminate rancor from the Class Struggle in the only way that rancor can be eliminated, to wit, by exemplifying the lack of intellect on the part of the Ruling Class regarding the Social Question, hence the utter futility of looking to its representatives for help

It should not be doubted that President Taft felt sick at heart at the sight of the human waifs crowded before him, and that he spoke sincerely when he told them: “I assure you that your fellow citizens an more fortunate fellows aren't the greedy and oppressive persons some would make them out to be, but more than ever are their

hearts open to help the suffering, and the desire to do so is growing every day.” A clearer picture of helplessness before the social problem can with difficulty be conceived.

The sad plight of the proletariat is, in the President’s language, a matter of “bad luck”; society, according to his words, is a Wheel of Fortune, and as with Wheels of Fortune, the prizewinners are few, the losers many, as a matter of course; nor do winners need be hard-hearted, their hearts will open, but not their purses, on the contrary, luck being the thing, the lucky, naturally, cling all the more tightly to the system that keeps them out of the rain and wind and cold. As the representative of capitalist society the President of the Nation had nothing to offer but the salve of pity to alleviate unavoidable, God-ordained pain.

This is, indeed, the posture of the Capitalist Class—dense ignorance. And their class interests cultivate the density. Not rancor, but the benignest of firmness is the means that ignorance calls for its dissipation. Capitalist dense ignorance should cleanse the proletariat of all sense of rancor, and urge their systematic work to fashion the broom that shall wipe out Ignorance

As the President stood and spoke before the 500 unemployed who fled from the rain into the Bowery Mission the gist of his words were:

“How long will you workers tramp in the Wilderness of Capitalist Class Ignorance?”

No photographer’s camera could snap off that picture.

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