

# DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 4, NO. 246.

NEW YORK, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 2, 1904.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

## SHOT NO. 1.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**T**HE Louisville, Ky., *Journal of Labor*, well known as an organ of the capitalist class, has gathered a long string of questions which it heads “Pertinent Questions for Socialists to Answer.” It is not our habit to answer the dog that barks from behind a fence. For the canine we keep the toes of our shoes, should he get too near. But even if he remains at a distance, if he is too insolent, we see to—what? To him? No! To his master. And so now, especially seeing that his master—the pie-bald combination that feeds and eggs him on—has been stupid enough to expose himself through these questions as a target that it will be fun to riddle with shot. So now and at it, shot after shot—at the master.

One of the questions is:

“If a man like Elias Howe invents a sewing machine, which is of incalculable benefit to society, why should he be robbed of the real net value of his invention?”

He should not be robbed; and it is just because, among the iniquities of capitalism, is the daily robbery of the inventor and the robber capitalist then does what all robbers do, uses his stolen property as a scourge to others, that Socialism is in the field.

Here are few instances:

The Bonsack case. An inventor was robbed of his invention on the ground that the inventor had made a contract to give all his inventions to the company in consideration of employment. He had been in the employ of the company but, when he made the invention and all the time he was perfecting it, he had no wages and himself disbursed all his expenses.

The Dempsey case. The inventor was robbed of his chemical discoveries in

coloring dye-stuffs, on the ground that “it would be intolerable to the employer (it was the employer, whom the inventor wanted to quit, who robbed him of the fruit of his genius), to be made dependent upon his employe, who could then tyrannize over him.”

Still more recently is the case decided by the United States Circuit Court of Appeals for the First Circuit. This was another case in which “in consideration of employment” an employe had agreed that the employer was to have the benefit of all the inventions made by the employe, and that he was “to keep the same for ever secret” if required by the employer. The courts were resorted to by the employer in order to keep the padlock on the inventor’s mouth. He pleaded that the keeping of such a secret, thereby depriving society of its advantages, as the dog-in-the-manger employer exacted, was “unconscionable and against public policy.” The capitalist Court held against the employe, declaring such a demand on the part of the employer to be neither unconscionable nor against, but positively in favor of, public policy!

And still more recently, the case of Henry K. Goodwin now in a Massachusetts prison. Senator Callender and Lawyer Rawley, who wished to get the man pardoned declared that “the electrical companies in Massachusetts opposed Goodwin’s release on the ground that Goodwin had invented a switchboard which is substantially the one now in use by the Bell Telephone and New England Telephone Companies.”!!

It is obvious from two of the above officially recorded instances that numerous must be the other instances of employes, who, driven by the capitalist lash of hunger—for what Elias Howe would sell his power of invention as “good measure” to his ordinary labor power for the starvation wages of employment, except he is driven by such lash?—meekly allow their capitalist employer to rob them of their invention. Equally obvious is the fact, known, moreover, from common observation that the robbed inventor is too poor to bring and keep his case long enough in court so as to reach a decision, and be regularly entered on the records as a robbed inventor. The United States courts on patent decisions run over with proofs of the fact that under capitalism inventors are robbed of their inventions by the capitalists, and that the capitalist courts are there to obscure the show of evil with a decision, and the capitalist parsons, of all creeds, are there to bless and approve of

the robbery with a text, by blessing and approving capitalism, and by slandering Socialism.

When capitalists declare that Socialism would rob the inventor, and thereby imply that capitalism protects him, it is a case of the detected thief setting up the cry of "Stop thief!" The robbery of most inventors is inevitable under capitalist society, because under such a social system the bulk of useful labor is and must be robbed by the capitalist class. Hence Socialism, where the working class would enjoy their full social share of their labor, is the sole guarantee, not only against the robbery now perpetrated on the inventor, but the robbery perpetrated on the whole working class.

And there goes one shot through the poodles' master.

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

Uploaded April 2007

[slpns@slp.org](mailto:slpns@slp.org)