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EDITORIAL

“IDLENESS” AND “CRIME.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

HERE is an ash-barrel gem from the ash-barrel of the capitalist press:

“It has been shown by statistics of crime in the United States that not less than 80 per cent of the population of our prisons comprises persons who have learned no trade or handicraft. These statistics are interesting. They are significant. They show—”

Now what do these truly interesting and significant statistics show? They show two things, two closely connected things:

First, that with the improvement of machinery, skill is being rapidly eliminated from the trades. The skill once needed in the handicraft of the shoemaker, of the spinner, of the weaver, of the carpenter, etc., etc., is no longer needed. Once it required a life-time to “learn a trade”; the trade now needs hardly any learning.

Second, that the improved machinery being privately owned it displaces, not hours of work, but the workers themselves; and being operated for profit and not for use, shuts down when no profits can be made.

These two connected facts point to a theory, to wit, that unable to earn their living honestly, the avenues thereto being shut to the increasing numbers of tradeless people, they are bound to take to crime. And the theory is confirmed by the statistics. This is what the truly interesting and significant statistics show—the criminality of the capitalist system.

Now, watch what these truly interesting and significant statistics show to the block-head of the capitalist journalists:

“They show conclusively that idleness is one of the most prolific of all sources of crime”!!!

What this capitalist reasoning shows is that the stomach of the mind of the

capitalist class labors under chronic indigestion. It is incapable of digesting the facts that it takes in.

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