

# DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 11, NO. 257.

NEW YORK, TUESDAY, MARCH 14, 1911.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

## MALTHUS IN HARLEM.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**F**ROM the heights of Mount Morris Park, up in Harlem, Dr. Wm. J. Robinson has fluttered to earth with a theory that excessive childbirth among the poor is one of the greatest causes of low wages and poverty.

The original Malthus taught that poverty was unavoidable, on the supposed ground that population increased faster than its food supply. Clarified on this score by a century's wonderful development in the means of production, his 1911 successor puts it differently. High birth rate, reasons Dr. Robinson, means a crowded labor market; a crowded labor market means low wages; low wages mean poverty; ergo, stop the excessive childbirth, and poverty will vanish.

Each of Dr. Robinson's three premises is correct, and yet his conclusion is false—as false as it would be to argue that because a frog could jump six inches high, in four jumps he would land outside a two-foot-deep hole. However many six inch jumps the frog might take, he would in the end be just as poorly off. His ascensions toward the top would be temporary of the temporary. The hole would still engulf him. However much the wage slave might, on Dr. Robinson's plan, tend to ease conditions for a while, the benefit gained would in the long run be merely illusory. He would still be at the bottom of the hole of wage slavery.

What ails the wage slave to-day is not that there are so many of him, but that he is wage slave at all. Let wage slavery stand, and the employing class can always see to it that there is an unemployed army ready to beat down wages. Just simultaneously with the proclamation of Dr. Robinson's theory, the papers printed the news of the Price-Campbell cotton pickers throwing half a million or so southern plantation hands out of work. Of how many children must the worker deprive himself, to meet advances like that?

The problem is not how to be happy without a family, by the lopping off of

wants and desires. That amounts to a dodging of the question. The problem before humanity is how to secure itself in the right and natural enjoyment of all its functions, so that its children may be born into a heritage of joy and plenty. Such a consummation, devoutly to be wished though it be, the methods of Malthus and his Harlem emulator only fog-bind and delay.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.  
Uploaded January 2012

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