

EDITORIAL

DON'T—AND THEN?—DIE!

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE Committee on Sanitation of the Central Federated Union of this city, and the Committee on the Prevention of Tuberculosis of the Charity Organization Society, have jointly issued a circular on the subject of consumption. Under the heading “How to Prevent Consumption” there are several “Don’ts.” Of these, three run as follows:

“Don’t live in rooms where there is no fresh air.”

“Don’t work in rooms where there is no fresh air.”

“Don’t sleep in rooms where there is no fresh air.”

To the majority of the workingmen these preventives are worse than the disease itself—they mean speedy death by starvation and exposure. Nor are the two committees ignorant of the fact.

As to sleeping rooms, the committees themselves have on exhibition a sample sleeping room, no less than 350,000 others of the same kind being reported to be in this city. The sample exhibits a small, dingy compartment, impossible of proper ventilation, the last place in which to look for fresh air.

As to rooms in which work is done, the committees have no exhibits. Probably they considered any such exhibits would be superfluous. The working rooms in the factories or shops of this city, or any other city, are notoriously everything but resorts of fresh air. Dusty, musty, crowded, and fetid with impure air, due to impossible ventilation, pure air is not to {be} found in factories, as a rule.

Now, then, if workingmen are not to work in rooms where there is no free air, they can’t work at all. They will have to starve; and, seeing they are also told not to sleep in rooms where there is no fresh air, most of them will have to sleep on the street—in other words, hasten their death by starvation, with death through the ailments of exposure.

Do these sapient Committees address these “Don’ts” to the Working Class?—Then they mock it?

Do they not mean to mock the Working Class?—Then they are addressing themselves to the Capitalist Class—a superfluous expenditure of time, cash and energy.

Consumption, along with all the thousand and one horrors that the Working Class are afflicted with, is but a consequence of the central, the causal pest-breeder—WAGE SLAVERY or the CAPITALIST SYSTEM. Quack or fool is he who would neglect the central ailment of a patient, and devote thought to the prevention of its unpreventable consequences. No less quack or fool is he, she, it, or they who would leave unassailed the system of wage slavery, and then waste time and money in a pretentious endeavor to prevent the inevitable ills thereof by “Don’ts” that presuppose civilized instead of capitalist conditions.

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