

EDITORIAL

REPEATING LEGISLATION.

By DANIEL DE LEON

MUCH food for thought is furnished in a single sentence that occurs in Jeannette Pearl's recent and interesting letter in *The People* entitled "Seen in a Soda Water Factory."¹ It states that what the men received for their risks, which are not few, is their small weekly wage, and that even this is not given them *before signing an agreement that it is their own fault if they sustain an injury.*

The Legislature has enacted certain factory laws. The theory upon which these laws are planted is the identical theory upon which are planted the laws that extend special protection to sailors. The conditions under which the sailor labors are such that he can not be left entirely to himself without exposing him to be imposed upon. So with the workingman. His status is so dependent that, if special protection is not thrown around him, he would be exposed to the grasping, reckless greed of the employer, who, in order to save expenses, would conduct his establishment in a manner so reckless that the life and limbs of his hands would be in serious jeopardy. Hence factory laws.

Has the soda factory in question repealed the factory laws made and provided for the protection of the employes? The argument that they are not compelled to sign is of no force. As well claim that no factory laws are needed on the ground that the worker "is not compelled to take work" in a factory that is not safe. The identical reason why factory laws are necessary demonstrates that the demand made by the soda factory to applicants for work, that they sign away the right of redress given them by the law, is in violation of the factory act, unless the act has been repealed.

Has the factory act been repealed? There is no record of any such repeal to be found in this office. To conclude from this fact that the factory act has not been

¹ [To be appended.—R.B.]

repealed would be to hold the capitalists who run the soda factory guilty of lawlessness. That, of course, is out of all question. A capitalist is nothing if he is not a perambulating lump of lawabidingness. Seeing it is not in the heart of any capitalist to violate an unrepealed law, there is no alternative left but to conclude that the factory act is repealed.

And so it is—de facto—in the soda water factory.

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

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