

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 11, NO. 250.

NEW YORK, TUESDAY, MARCH 7, 1911.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

OWN THE TOOLS OF PRODUCTION.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE sum of \$20,000 per year having been demanded by her mother as “absolutely necessary for her proper maintenance,” Marie Louise Elkins, a 19-year-old Philadelphia traction heiress, has been awarded that amount by the court.

As Marie Louise Elkins is of no better clay, and certainly no more useful, than any of her 4,833,630 working sisters in the land, what is “absolutely necessary” for her proper maintenance is by the same token absolutely necessary for theirs also. She having been granted \$20,000 a year, that figure may be taken as at least the minimum every working girl ought to have. How near do they come to getting it?

According to the items presented to the Philadelphia court in the Elkins case, the young lady requires for rooms at hotel, a month, \$640. The average working girl huddles with her family in 3 or 4 rooms at a rental of \$14 a month, of which she probably contributes \$2 or \$3. The sum Miss Elkins contemplates running through in one bare month, on this item alone, the working girl must stretch out over a period but little short of 18 years.

Motor, chauffeur and horses, \$3,000 per year, come next on Miss Elkins’s schedule. Allowing the working girl five cents’ carfare each way every day she goes to work, and even adding the extravagant assumption that she squanders an equal sum riding to some point of recreation daily or on Sundays and holidays, her outlay for “motor, chauffeur and horses” per year would be \$60. In other words, Miss Elkins’s allowance for one year the working girl must pinch along on for a full 50 years, probably longer than her whole natural life.

Clothing the working girl needs no less than Miss Elkins. But while the traction heiress’s requisition calls for \$5,000 a year for dresses alone, her proletarian sister must provide “hat, dress, ribbons, shoes, stockings, umbrella, cloak for winter, and

everything” on a sum no greater than \$50—’tis all she can spare from her wages for this purpose. It would take a full century of such expenditure for her to reach the sum appropriated each twelvemonth to the wardrobe of Miss Idleness.

Balls, dinner, etc., are down on Miss Elkins’s list for from \$3,000 to \$5,000 yearly. Taking \$2 weekly as the average per capita cost of food in the proletarian’s family, and raising it to \$3 for the sake of bounteousness, one year of Miss Elkins’s balls and dinners would suffice to keep a workingman’s whole family of six in copious provisions for over eleven years.

And as if this were not enough, Miss Elkins’s mother demands for her \$10,000 a year for travel and vacations—vacations are needed, apparently, even from motors, dresses, and balls and dinners. In this item comparison with a proletarian budget is absolutely impossible, for the proletarian able to indulge at all in vacations and travel is a negligible quantity.

Thus stands the balance: the daughter of idleness rioting in luxury, the daughter of toil skimping along on thwarted aspirations. Why? Because the daughter of idleness has the tools of production in her possession.

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Uploaded January 2012

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