

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 8, NO. 349.

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, JUNE 13, 1908.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

A HOAX; OR, IDIOCY.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE firm of Funk and Wagnalls announces that it is about to publish a new book by Mr. Roland Hall. The title of the new book is soberly given. In vain may one seek to detect the wrinkle of a smile of suppressed laughter in the lines that give the new book its first boost. The seriousness on the countenance of the printed lines suggest that the publishing firm and booster may, perhaps, not be intent on cracking a joke upon the public. This conclusion in turn suggests that the firm is angry, angry all the way through at the progress made by Socialist thought, and that it has decided, seeing that bombs thrown into Socialism only explode in the faces of, and damage the throwers themselves, not to try the bomb experiment, but to try, instead, a “spoke in the wheel” experiment.

What else but a huge joke, or a sly dig at Socialism, can be a book entitled *How to Get a Position and How to Keep It?*

Positions are of vital importance only to those who need them for existence. Members of the capitalist class do frequently desire a position—but not for existence, only for additional power. Their existence is assured by their capital, until swallowed up by some bigger capitalist among them. The getting and keeping of a position is of vital importance only to the proletarian. To him existence is at end without a position; it starts with a position; it is dependent upon a position. A consequence of this state of things is that both the getting and the keeping of a position are matters beyond the tackles of the workingman. He gets a position, not through any virtues residing in him, machinery is steadily eliminating skill; he gets a position when the capitalist is of the opinion that it is profitable to operate his plant; he keeps his position so long as the capitalist remains of that opinion; he loses his position just so soon as the capitalist ceases to be of that opinion.

The proletarian may be defined as a human being with whom the getting and

the keeping of a position depends upon the capitalist class.

To promise people, who need a position for existence, that you can tell them how to get and keep one is a hoax; to induce them to pay for the information is a cruel hoax—unless the claim is made in denial of Socialism and then, well, then, it is idiocy.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded February 2010

slpns@slp.org