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EDITORIAL

VINDICATING JUDGE BARTLETT.

By DANIEL DE LEON

FROM Washington comes the information that the results of an investigation of phosphorus poisoning in our American match factories, made by Dr. John B. Andrews, point to a state of things that is nothing short of criminal.

The employes, who come in contact with the white phosphorus used in all our factories, or with its fumes, are exposed to phosphorus necrosis. Most frequently the jawbones are attacked, not infrequently necessitating the removal of an entire jaw by surgical operation.

The report says nothing about the long hours of work in these death-traps, where, if the work is necessary, the hours should be so short as to expose the body to a minimum of danger; nor does the report say anything about the miserable wages paid in these pestholes, where, if society needs the work there to be performed, the wages should be proportionally high to secure a proportionally high power of physical resistance. Of all this Bulletin 86 of the Department of Commerce and Labor which makes the report makes no mention. Possibly the reporter considered that it is well known that the Gould family is extensively interested in match factories, and that, consequently, it was superfluous to add that wages were rascally low, and hours scampishly long. But the report does make mention of the "conditions of work." As to that, the statement is to the effect that "detailed investigations of fifteen match factories showed that 65 per cent. of the employes [among whom are many women and children] were working under conditions exposing them to the fumes of phosphorus and the dangers of phosphorus poisoning"—in other words, these factories are operated in defiance of common humanity, and are unqualified nuisances.

It matters not that Judge Bartlett, recently quoted more than once in these

columns, had no object other than to shield a factory owner against the consequences of his dereliction, by non-suiting a workingwoman whom that capitalist's conduct had crippled for life. All the same, and for that very reason, the Judge's reason for the non-suit was so prime as to deserve immortalizing. His reason being that the girl had assumed an "obvious risk," the Judge thereby issued a pronouncement that these match factories investigations vindicate—the modern factory is a death-trap, an "obvious risk."

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