

# DAILY PEOPLE

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EDITORIAL

## AN OPEN LETTER.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**T**O John B. Andrews,  
Sec'y Amer. Ass'n for Labor Legislation.  
Dear Sir:—

We have your favor of the 7th of this month in which you say:

“In your issue of April 5 you quote from the *Nome Industrial Worker* the statement: ‘There is one industry alone where anyone who stays in it for any length of time dies from a sickening disease. That is match-making from white phosphorous. It is prohibited now everywhere except in the United States.’

“I would like to state for the benefit of your readers that this last statement is fortunately no longer true. By the terms of the Esch-Hughes bill, drafted by this Association after careful scientific study, and signed by President Taft on April 9, 1912, a prohibitive tax was levied on white phosphorus matches manufactured in this country, to go into effect July 1, 1913. The importation and exportation of such matches are also prohibited, the prohibitions going into effect on January 1, 1913, and on January 1, 1914, respectively.”

From the allegations offered by yourself, it follows:

1—White phosphorus match factories are sickening-disease and death-dealing industries;

2.—Supposing that the law, signed by President Taft, which “levies a prohibitive tax on white phosphorus matches manufactured in this country” will actually have the effect of effectively prohibiting match-making from white phosphorus in this country, the prohibition goes into effect not before July 1, 1913.

3.—The statement which you quote from these columns appeared on April 5—nearly three months before the prohibition of match-making from white phosphorus becomes of force;

4.—Even at the date of this writing the match-making from white phosphorus is permitted in this country, and the sickening-disease and death-dealing industry has still fully two months authority to run and commit its inhuman depredations.

5.—And finally, and as a conclusion of all these conclusions, the statement which appeared in these columns on April 5, so far from being “fortunately no longer true” as you rashly charge, was absolutely true, and continues to be true.

We applaud the efforts of those who seek to remove some of the most shocking of the effects of Capitalism. Small favors thankfully received, large ones in proportion. At the same time we submit that the benefits of such reformatory moves as those which your honorable Association has buckled down to, will be, and are, to a great extent weakened by a posture which exaggerates the success of your efforts, and wrongly charges the Socialist Labor Party’s press with untruthfully stating the facts. On April 9, 1912, President Taft signed the bill which was tantamount to an indictment of the moral make-up of capitalist profits-drawing owners of white phosphorus match-making factories, and yet that very bill, instead of immediately stamping out the pest, expressly granted it a lease of life of a year and nearly three months more! We submit that criticisms like yours, tend to blur the iniquitous mental poise of Capitalism,—and to that extent nullify the good that Reform claims for itself—and to the fulness of that extent vindicate Socialism in looking upon Reform with suspicion.

Yours truly,

EDITOR DAILY PEOPLE.

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