

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 11, NO. 214.

NEW YORK, MONDAY, JANUARY 30, 1911.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

SEEING PAST ONE'S NOSE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

NO doubt education is a desirable thing, a great thing. In the gentler duty of rendering life enjoyable, as well as in the sterner task of hewing out a livelihood, its advantages are manifest. Correct was Dr. Katherine Bement Davis, superintendent of the State Reformatory for women at Bedford, when she arraigned New York before her audience at the Church of the Messiah on the 22nd inst. for not properly enforcing its compulsory education law. Flawless was her presentation of the resultant evils. Yet Dr. Davis slipped when, trying to make her ox-skin of fact cover an acre of theory, she said: "Society is to be blamed for not having provided for the education of these girls in some lucrative trade."

Great as education is, it is no "Open Sesame." Under the present industrial system, where not the masses but the few control the means of production, it can lift up the individual only so long as his education is superior to his fellows'. As soon as all are equally well educated, all become again equally poor.

How true this is, is illustrated by the despatches appearing simultaneously with the reports of Dr. Davis's address, from the Westinghouse plant at Pittsburgh. Here trained mechanical engineers, graduates of the best technical colleges over the world, are reported to be working nine hours a day for 20 cents an hour—a daily wage of \$1.80.

Some years ago men of this training and capacity would have been true "aristocrats of labor," in enjoyment of approximate independence and comfortable stipends. Now they are sunk to the 20-cents-an-hour class. Why? Because so many others have acquired the same training and capacity.

Dr. Davis' remedy for female delinquency—an education for the girls in some lucrative trade—might stand for a time. Its ultimate effect could, under the wage system, only result in the trade's no longer being lucrative. As a social cure for mass

poverty, the “education” theory is false. Not to recognize that fact is not to see past one’s nose.

Is education, then, to be neglected? By no means. By every rise in the standard of knowledge and training that the individual makes, by every conscious increase of his worth, by every addition to this store of information, he becomes so much the more powerful a unit of discontent against the social system that condemns him and his class to a life of unfilled aspirations. Education paves the way; the educated man must carry out the Revolution that will free him.

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Uploaded December 2011

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