

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 2, NO. 66.

NEW YORK, WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 1901.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

APPLIED PATERNALISM.

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THE purchase of the Danish West Indies will add but little wealth to this country, and their maintenance will necessitate an outlay as great, if not greater than the income. Still it is important that they should be purchased, as they increase the possibilities for sons and relations who have been unable to market their “directive ability,” or their “superior genius.” Each of the three islands will need at least two officials, and this force will be increased by the home officials, secretaries, clerks, etc. Such an addition will solve a few problems as to what is to be done with the stupid member of the family, or with the importunate office seeker.

Little attention has been paid to the growth of the national service, and still less attention has been paid to its significance. The national service, the state service, and the municipal service require an army that is many times greater and more costly than that in any one industry of the country. The offices do not go by merit, or by necessity, but they are apportioned either politically, or to persons who are recognized as having the “right” to demand them.

The truth of this is seen in Cuba, Porto Rico, and the Philippines. There, within about four years, there has been an increase in “our colonial service” of something like 2,400 men, and each one of these has a job that requires but little work, and for it he receives pay that would be a windfall to the average well paid clerk.

A position in any one of these departments is not to be despised. Judging from the scramble that takes place, it is not despised, for the demands increase, and the Government searches every avenue for an opening to increase the opportunities for these places. The purchase of the Danish West Indies is an example of this. The “Committee of Investigation” sent to various countries, the committees sent throughout this country are further examples.

This eagerness to give jobs in certain directions could only come from pressure brought to bear by persons within the parties that control the Government. This

pressure would not be brought to bear if those persons were able to make a living in any other way. The Republican and Democratic parties are parties of the capitalist class. They are controlled by capitalists. Therefore, the increase in Governmental jobs is simply pressure that was injuring capitalism.

There are at least 2 million persons engaged in the various branches. When the total of the working population of the country is computed it will be found that this comprises at least 15 per cent. of the working population, or about one man in seven. They range from the President down to the gentlemen who clean the streets. They comprise every imaginable branch of trade, every calling, and every profession. Each and every position must be obtained by service to the capitalist class. That class is willing to increase the number of openings, and this very fact reveals its weakness.

Those who talk of “paternalism” and “state support” being principles of the Socialist Labor Party should look at the government of this country. It is barnacled with office-holders. It is weighted down with incompetents. It is beset on every side with those who have not yet landed in a berth, but who desire to. It costs untold millions of dollars to satisfy those who are already in, and it will cost untold millions more to satisfy those who are destined to get in during the next few years.

This matter becomes all the more glaring just prior to an election. There the struggle centers around the matter of job-giving. That is a plank that never changes. Democrat and Republican alike will offer anything for power, and will retain that power by liberal patronage. But that patronage is bestowed only for those who work for these parties. It is not a reward of merit, and it never can be. It is simply another instance of the fact that capitalism has undermined its own structure, and can maintain it only by undermining it still further.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded June 2006