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EDITORIAL

THE S.D.P. OPPORTUNITY.

By DANIEL DE LEON

WAS it accident, was it wickedness, was it fatality that the *Appeal to Reason*—the “actual and sole agitator for Socialism in the land”; the one cause of the Socialist party “big vote{”}; thence the real cause, no doubt, of the Social Democratic triumph in Milwaukee—was it fatality, was it wickedness, was it accident that at the very time when, from Victor L. Berger down, the triumphant Milwaukee S.D.P.’s were announcing what a lovely town to live in their administration was to make Milwaukee, the *Appeal to Reason* had an article by Mother Jones on “Girl Slaves of Milwaukee Breweries”?

The article presents a distressful picture. The girls employed in the bottle-washing department of Milwaukee’s colossal breweries are worse than wage slaves: they are pariahs. The wages are from 75 to 85 cents a day—but. But the girls are not allowed to work more than three or four days. Accordingly, their earnings average only \$3.00 a week. Kept at so meager a stipend at a job held by so slender a thread, the girls are attuned to submit to imposition upon imposition. Odd jobs without number “for which there is not even the suggestion of compensation,” are demanded of them after their day’s work is done. On top, probably by reason, of all this, the treatment these human waifs are subjected to by the foremen is positively revolting. One instance cited is that of one of the girls, about to become a mother, being forced to submit to the frequent affliction of her girth being measured by one of the brutish overseers. Such is the poverty of these girls, the damp, utterly unhealthy conditions they have to perform their work in, that the just conviction is expressed that these big breweries “are setting out incubators to hatch out germs enough of tuberculosis bacteria to destroy the nation.” This summary will do. It sufficiently unveils the picture of a nasty town, unworthy of human habitation. The picture seems framed on purpose for presentation to the triumphant S.D.P., and is

labeled “Your Opportunity.”

Here certainly is an opportunity for any party of however languid a reform program. For a party that asserts its reform purposes to be but the “revolutionary” steps towards the Socialist Commonwealth the opportunity is exceptional.

Bacteria-breeding colossal establishments come within the tackles of a municipal administration. Morality-undermining practices fall within the purview of a municipal District Attorney. Finally, wages-crushing methods surely are subjects that demand the cognizance of loyal Unionists. The opportunity is there; the task is cut out and laid before the triumphers at Milwaukee. What will their conduct approve the *Appeal to Reason* article—accident? wickedness? fatality?

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